

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

[Irmo, South Carolina]

HEARING # 20-11857

JANUARY 30, 2020

6:00 P.M.

DOCKET NO. 2019-290-WS:

Blue Granite Water Company - Application for Approval to Adjust
Rate Schedules and Increase Rates

TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY
AND PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 2 OF 10

HEARING BEFORE: Comer H. 'Randy' RANDALL, *Chairman*; Florence
P. BELSER, *Interim Vice Chairman*; and COMMISSIONERS John
E. 'Butch' HOWARD, Thomas J. 'Tom' ERVIN, Swain E.
WHITFIELD, and O'Neal HAMILTON

ADVISOR TO COMMISSION: B. Randall Dong, Esq.
Legal Advisory Staff

STAFF: Jocelyn Boyd, Chief Clerk/Executive Director; Jerisha
Dukes, Esq., Legal Advisory Staff; William O. Richardson, John
Powers, Amanda Golebiowski, and Norman Scarborough, Technical
Advisory Staff; Patricia Stephens, Afton Ellison, and Rob Bockman,
Clerk's Staff; and Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC, Court
Reporter

APPEARANCES:

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COMPANY, APPLICANT

LAURA R. 'BECKY' DOVER, ESQUIRE, representing
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INTERVENOR

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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HUBER, ESQUIRE**, representing the SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE
OF REGULATORY STAFF

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Good evening, everyone. If we can get everyone to take a seat, we'd like to welcome everyone here to this hearing tonight. We're glad that you are here. This is your time. We want to hear what you have to say, and we look forward to this evening with you.

Before we get started in this proceeding, I want to take appearances from all the parties, so we'll start with the company.

MR. WELLBORN: Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the company, I'm Sam Wellborn. Along with me here is Frank Ellerbe. We have with us, as well, Mr. Chairman, staff from the company, including Bryce Mendenhall, Vice President of Operations for the company. We would encourage the public, as well, if there are any specific issues that need to be brought to the company's attention –

VOICE: Louder.

MR. WELLBORN: Sorry.

VOICE: Can't hear you.

MR. WELLBORN: Where shall I read again?

VOICE: I still can't hear you.

MR. WELLBORN: On behalf of the company, I'm Sam Wellborn. Along with me here is Frank Ellerbe.

1 We also have Bryce Mendenhall, Vice President of
2 Operations for the company. And I would encourage
3 you, if there are specific issues that you need to
4 have addressed by the company, to come to Mr.
5 Mendenhall and his staff, and they'll try to help
6 you with that issue.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 **VOICE:** Who do we see?

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

10 **VOICE:** Could he stand up so we can see,
11 please? So we know who to address?

12 **VOICE:** Right here in the front.

13 **VOICE:** Thank you.

14 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Office of Regulatory Staff.

15 **MR. BATEMAN:** Good evening, Mr. Chairman and
16 members of the Commission. My name is Andrew
17 Bateman. Along with me up here this evening is Mr.
18 Alex Knowles, representing the South Carolina
19 Office of Regulatory Staff.

20 **MS. DOVER:** Hi, everybody. I'm Becky Dover.
21 I'm the Assistant Consumer Advocate and I'm here on
22 behalf of the Department of Consumer Affairs.

23 **MR. MOORE:** My name is Jake Moore. I'm the
24 attorney for the Town of Irmo, South Carolina. We
25 are in Intervenor into the action. We have with us

1 tonight – somewhere out there – our Mayor and, I
2 believe, all of the members of Council.

3 **VOICE:** And where is that?

4 **MR. MOORE:** What?

5 **VOICE:** Where are they?

6 **MR. MOORE:** Barry, where are you? You were
7 here a minute ago. We have Kelly Bush, we have the
8 Mayor. I know Eric is here, and maybe Kathy is –

9 **VOICE:** In Alabama.

10 **MR. MOORE:** Kathy's not here yet, but I
11 understand she's either coming, or she may be with
12 her husband who has been fairly ill for a long
13 time, as most of you know. I know she will be here
14 tonight.

15 **VOICE:** Thank you, sir.

16 **MR. MOORE:** Thank you, ma'am.

17 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Moore.

18 Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin, I want
19 to introduce the members of the Public Service
20 Commission. To my far left, Commissioner Butch
21 Howard, from the First District; Commissioner
22 O'Neal Hamilton, from the Seventh District;
23 Commissioner Swain Whitfield, from the Fifth
24 District. To my far right, Commissioner Florence
25 Belser, from the Second District; Commissioner Tom

1 Ervin, from the Fourth District. Our
2 Commissioner – Commissioner Justin Williams, from
3 the Sixth District, is serving our country in Iraq
4 right now, so we wish him well.

5 [Applause]

6 We'd also like to welcome – we want to say
7 thank you to Mayor Walker and the members of the
8 Irmo City Council and everyone that's involved in
9 letting us use this space, so that we can listen to
10 you tonight. We appreciate your hospitality here.
11 We also want to welcome Sen. Ronnie Cromer, who is
12 here. I think Sen. Harpootlian came in. There you
13 go, Sen. Harpootlian, Rep. Chip Huggins, and Rep.
14 Nathan Ballentine. We appreciate all of you being
15 here tonight.

16 Okay. I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Andrew
17 Bateman to give us a few words from the Office of
18 Regulatory Staff.

19 **MR. BATEMAN:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr.
20 Chairman.

21 Good evening. As mentioned a second ago, my
22 name is Andrew Bateman and I am an attorney with
23 the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff.
24 Thank you all so much for coming out tonight.

25 The Public Service Commission is hosting this

1 hearing tonight, and the agency that I work for –
2 South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff – is a
3 separate State agency from the Public Service
4 Commission. You will hear the Office of Regulatory
5 Staff referred to commonly by its acronym, ORS.

6 The Commission is charged with making the
7 final decision on the Application that Blue Granite
8 has filed. ORS is charged with representing the
9 public interest and making recommendations to the
10 Commission.

11 This hearing is for you to share your thoughts
12 about Blue Granite Water Company's request to
13 increase its rates. The Commission scheduled this
14 night hearing because they know it is a significant
15 matter and they want to hear from you. What you
16 have to say is very important.

17 Please know that, if you speak tonight, what
18 you say becomes a part of the official record in
19 this case. Your testimony will be sworn and
20 recorded by the court reporter, Ms. Mary Jo Wheat.
21 The Commission will keep in mind what you say when
22 they deliberate and make a decision on this case.
23 All the parties will present testimony and evidence
24 to the Commission during the merits hearing, which
25 will be held beginning at 10 a.m. on Wednesday,

1 February 26th. The final decision in this case
2 should be issued by the Commission by no later than
3 April 2nd.

4 If you speak tonight, I may ask you some
5 questions. The attorneys for the other parties may
6 also ask you questions. The Commissioners may ask
7 you questions. Please do not get offended if we
8 do. It's simply because we want to learn more
9 about what you're saying. On the other hand,
10 please do not get offended if we do not ask you
11 questions.

12 As for the Commission, the Commissioners and
13 the Commission Staff are required to follow the
14 same rules as a judge. So while the Commission can
15 ask you questions, they cannot answer questions.
16 They are prohibited by law from answering
17 questions, so please do not get frustrated if you
18 state questions during your testimony and no one
19 answers.

20 With me tonight from the Office of Regulatory
21 Staff, in the back I believe we've got Ryder
22 Thompson with the ORS Utility Rates Department. We
23 have next to me, here, my co-counsel, Alex Knowles.
24 We've also got Ron Aiken, the manager of external
25 communications, Dawn Hipp, the Chief Operating

1 Officer, and our Executive Director, Nanette
2 Edwards, is here. Also you may have seen coming
3 in, outside in the lobby – or I think actually just
4 outside those doors – is Brad Kirby of the ORS
5 Consumer Services Department. You're welcome to
6 talk to our Consumer Services folks right now or at
7 any time during the hearing. If you prefer to talk
8 to myself, Mr. Knowles, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Edwards,
9 or Ms. Hipp, you can stick around after the hearing
10 and we'd be happy to talk to you for as long as it
11 takes. I can't answer questions while testimony is
12 being taken, but after the testimony is taken we'll
13 be happy to talk with you.

14 If you would like to contact our agency later,
15 ORS has a 1-800 number for Consumer Services. I'll
16 give you the number now, but I'm also happy to give
17 that to you later, in case you're not able to write
18 it down. The number is 1-800-922-1531. Our staff
19 is available from at least 8:30 to 5 every weekday,
20 and if you cannot call during office hours, you can
21 leave a message and we'll be happy to call you
22 back.

23 To give everyone here a bit of context and an
24 overview of the case before the Commission, the
25 company has asked for a 35 to 55 percent increase

1 in water rates and a 56 percent increase in sewer
2 rates. In particular, the company is requesting to
3 add a purchased-water and purchased-sewer charge to
4 customers' bills, to change the value of its
5 depreciation, to add a surcharge for customers'
6 bills for a storm reserve fund, to allow customers
7 to round up their payments to the nearest dollar,
8 with the funds directed by a community action
9 agency to assist low-income customers in paying
10 their water and sewer bills, and to be allowed the
11 opportunity to earn a profit for its shareholders
12 of 10.7 percent.

13 [Laughter]

14 **VOICE:** No.

15 **MR. BATEMAN:** ORS has filed testimony in this
16 case last Thursday. In short, ORS' testimony
17 recommends a reduction in the company's requested
18 revenue increase by a little over \$3 million. The
19 Commission is holding seven night hearings in
20 addition to the merits hearing, which starts at 10
21 a.m., on February 26th, in the Commission's hearing
22 room.

23 Please remember that we're all here tonight to
24 listen to you. During your three-minute allotment
25 of time, you'll be treated with courtesy and

1 respect. In turn, please be considerate and
2 respectful to the Commission as you direct remarks
3 towards them.

4 Thank you and thank everyone for being here,
5 and thank you for your attention during my opening
6 remarks.

7 Mr. Chairman, turning back to you, I'd ask
8 that the sign-in sheets be marked and entered into
9 the record as the next hearing exhibit.

10 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** The sign-in sheets will be
11 marked and entered into the record as Hearing
12 Exhibit No. 6.

13 **MR. BATEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
15 Bateman.

16 Okay. I'm going to turn it over to our
17 attorney, Mr. Randall Dong.

18 **MR. DONG:** Good evening. Oh, this does work.
19 Mr. Bateman did an excellent job of laying down the
20 overview of what we're doing here tonight. I'd
21 like to just reiterate a couple of things. First
22 of all, as you heard, the Commissioners are covered
23 by the Code of Judicial Conduct, which means they
24 cannot discuss the case with you all. However,
25 we're here to listen to you. So, if you would,

1 please refrain from directing questions toward the
2 Commissioners, because they're prohibited from
3 engaging in that way.

4 Also, if you would, please turn off your cell
5 phones or other devices. And – we're all turning
6 our phones off.

7 [Laughter]

8 And further, if you would, also please – we'll
9 try to get through this and hear as many people as
10 we can. Please observe the three-minute time
11 limit, and also please conduct yourselves as though
12 this were a courtroom, because that's basically
13 what we're doing tonight.

14 Thank you, very much.

15 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Dong.

16 I know three minutes sounds like a short
17 amount of time, but I know, if you've got your
18 thoughts organized, it can be a really long time.
19 We've got a clock here that Mr. Bill Richardson,
20 who will be swearing you in, will be running, and
21 to help you so you can watch it and see where you
22 are.

23 When you come to the podium, when you finish
24 your testimony, please remain at the podium for a
25 moment, because we want to make sure that, if there

1 are questions from any of the parties or any of the
2 Commissioners, that we're able to ask you that.
3 All of this is going to be on the record, with Ms.
4 Jo Wheat speaking every word that's said tonight,
5 so speak clearly and so she can understand you.

6 Now, when we start, Mr. Rob Bockman, who is
7 over to my left, will be calling names. And Mr.
8 Bockman will be trying to keep it moving so that we
9 can have folks at the podium and we can hear as
10 many people as possible, so...

11 Mr. Bockman, I'm going to turn it over to you.

12 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Good evening. My name is Rob Bockman. Many
14 of y'all have never been to a public night hearing,
15 so we're going to walk through the procedure very
16 quickly. What will happen is I will call three
17 names out; the first name will be the person who
18 signed up first, obviously, and they will approach
19 the podium, at which time they will be sworn in by
20 Mr. Bill Richardson. You'll have three minutes, as
21 discussed, to deliver your testimony. We will have
22 the other two people sitting at these two reserved
23 chairs in the very front row right down here by the
24 podium [indicating]. After the first person has
25 delivered their testimony, they have waited for the

Commissioners or any of the parties to ask any questions, they will then be seated; you may then take your turn at the podium. I will call your name out a second time. If you're out of the room when your name is called, I will call it again. So please do listen for your name and please do follow that process as closely as possible.

Aside from that, we'll get started momentarily. I'm just going to remove these placards here [indicating]. Our first three speakers will be Polly Clary, Herbie Meetze, and Tom Vacula. Polly Clary, Herbie Meetze, and Tom Vacula, please.

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

P O L L Y C L A R Y ,
who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: Polly Clary. Good evening.

I'm here tonight to ask y'all to deny this rate hike for Blue Granite. We just had a rate hike a couple of years ago that was – mine, I only have sewer with Blue Granite, but it jumped about \$20-something then. I know it's hard on people like me that are retired, and single, to try to keep up with the rate hikes. And it's my

1 understanding, from what I've read, that they're
2 going to ask for a rate hike every year.

3 So the question is, to me, when does it stop?
4 You know, how many times is this going to be done,
5 and people on fixed incomes have to come up with
6 the money for what appears to be mismanagement by
7 Blue Granite or Carolina Water or whoever initially
8 got them in this trouble, you know.

9 And we don't have a choice. You know, we're
10 the customers; we don't have a choice to go to
11 another company or anything. We're stuck. So
12 unless we get help like from the Commission and any
13 other avenues, like attorneys and stuff, we're just
14 stuck. You know, we're just going to have to pay
15 this.

16 I've also heard people say that they're going
17 to eventually – if this rate hike goes through –
18 move out of the community. And, you know, is that
19 what we really want, people moving out because they
20 can't afford a water bill or a sewer bill? That
21 just seems ridiculous to me.

22 So I guess that's all I wanted to say. So, any
23 help you can give us would be greatly appreciated.

24 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.

25 Any questions from the parties? Mr. Bateman.

CROSS EXAMINATION**R. BATEMAN:****Q** Ms. Clary –

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Make sure you get your microphone, Mr. Bateman. We're livestreaming so we want to make sure everybody is heard.

BY MR. BATEMAN:

Q Ms. Clary, I have one really quick clarifying question. Do you recall where you read that the company may seek a rate hike every year?

A I read it once through *The State* paper, and I forgot the other website I read that on. I do remember *The State* but I think it was a couple of places I saw that.

MR. BATEMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you.

Any other questions from the parties?

[No response]

Commissioners, any questions?

[No response]

Ms. Clary – oh?

MR. MOORE: May I ask just one question?

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Yes, sir. Mr. Moore?

CROSS EXAMINATION**BY MR. MOORE:**

Q Ms. Clary, you say you're single; is that correct?

1 A Yes, sir. Retired. Limited income.

2 Q And it's my understanding that you're charged the same
3 amount every month; is that right?

4 A Yes, sir.

5 Q How much are you paying right now?

6 A Sixty-five dollars.

7 Q So you're paying \$65 a month for a single person to live
8 in a house?

9 A For sewer. Sewer only.

10 Q Just sewer.

11 A Just sewer.

12 Q Now, how big is that house?

13 A It's – I don't know, small as about 1300 square feet,
14 1400.

15 Q So with one person in a small home, you would pay the
16 same amount for sewer as someone with six kids in a
17 5000-square-foot home?

18 A Yes, sir, I am.

19 Q You think that's unfair?

20 [Applause]

21 A Yes, I do. I mean, my water – my water fluctuates, you
22 know, depending on how much I use, but, yeah, it's just
23 high.

24 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you.

25 Any other questions, Commissioners?

[No response]

Thank you, ma'am, appreciate you being here.

WITNESS: Thank you.

[Applause]

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

MR. BOCKMAN: Up next, we have Herbie Meetze, followed by Tom Vacula and Bill Byrd on deck, please. Bill Byrd to the front?

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

H E R B I E M E E T Z E ,

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: My name is Herbie Meetze. I live in Southwell subdivision, off Irmo Drive. I've been a customer of Blue Granite's sewer service for 18 years and strongly oppose any increase in the rates for Blue Granite.

When I first started with Blue Granite in 2002, my sewer bill was \$30.33 a month. By 2006, it had increased to \$37.76, a 24.5 percent increase. By 2014, \$44.60 for an 18.11 percent increase. Two years later, 2016, it had increased to \$57.58, a 29.1 percent increase. In 2019, it increased to \$65.08, a 13.3 percent increase.

Now, with the request before us, Blue Granite

1 is asking for \$101.30, a 55.65 percent increase.
2 From 2016 to present, they've requested increases
3 totaling 75.93 percent. Enough is enough.

4 My average water consumption – and we're
5 getting to this, because I've got a comment on
6 that, too. My average water consumption – I have a
7 house with just my wife and I. We're both retired.
8 Our gallons per month is 4425, on the average, and
9 that includes the months of June, July, August, and
10 September when it's hot and we have to water our
11 flowers and grass. Such increases for lifeline
12 services – and that's what this is – as noted by
13 AARP in the previous rate case is, quote, "Very
14 burdensome to older customers and can threaten
15 health and safety, particularly for individuals
16 such as our members of the low- and fixed-income
17 customers," end quote.

18 As you know, too many of older customers are
19 already struggling to afford such increases because
20 they spend a greater portion of their fixed income
21 on food, sewer, and water, than higher-income
22 households. The loss of water and/or sewer service
23 could require some households to forgo other
24 necessities, such as food and prescription
25 medicines.

1 May I remind all Commissioners such increases
2 of 55.65 percent might contradict the long accepted
3 practice of gradualism in rate design. And that is
4 taken from SCPSC Docket 2018-319-E, page five.

5 Customers appearing before this Commission
6 have also noted that there are lower rates in our
7 surrounding neighborhoods and areas. I know that
8 you can't answer any of my questions tonight, but I
9 do not understand the proposed breakdown on these
10 sewer rates, of residential charges of \$47.10 per
11 unit is what Blue Granite is going to charge, and a
12 sewer treatment charge of \$54.26 per unit.

13 [3-minute signal]

14 I've got many more statements and things I'd
15 like to say.

16 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Well, we – if you want to,
17 you can give us your other statements, if they're
18 printed. We can enter that into the record.

19 **WITNESS:** And I did want to make a statement,
20 too, regarding Blue Granite's charge on – my
21 household consists of two people, as I said. We
22 pay as much as a household of four, six, or eight
23 people. And that's not justified. And Mr.
24 DeStefano's testimony, page 13, lines five through
25 ten, I believe he stated that the cost of their

1 provider is based on volumetric tariff rates. What
2 is the tariff rate, and why is my rate not based on
3 volume? These are my questions I would like to
4 submit.

5 [Applause]

6 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Questions from the parties?

7 **MR. ELLERBE:** I have no questions.

8 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** No questions?

9 Any questions?

10 **MR. BATEMAN:** I have one quick question, Mr.
11 Chairman.

12 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

13 **BY MR. BATEMAN:**

14 **Q** Mr. Meetze, I've got one quick question, which I think
15 relates to what you were saying right at the end there.
16 I think you're talking about the understandability of
17 your current bill, so is it your testimony that the
18 current bill is really too confusing to calculate what
19 the rate is?

20 **A** Well, no. I mean, the current bill just says you pay
21 \$65.08. That's it.

22 [Laughter; applause]

23 What the rate increase here says, that they're
24 proposing – remember we've been paying \$65.08 – the rate
25 increase that they're getting says that Blue Granite

1 will not be charging \$47 and they're also going to be
2 charging, because the City of Columbia treats that
3 sewage, \$54. So I wanted to know what makes up the
4 \$47.10 that Blue Granite's charging, because all they
5 have is the lines, and the \$54 that City of Columbia is
6 charging. And I note also, in the last question the
7 lady was asked, I think she was asked about – oh, what
8 was it now?

9 **VOICE:** How big the house was?

10 **WITNESS:** No. My house – you know, like I
11 said, I have –

12 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Mr. Meetze, if you would
13 just answer his question, then –

14 **WITNESS:** Okay.

15 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** – we'll finish from there.
16 Also, we're going to put your comments that you had
17 printed in; we're going to mark them for
18 identification as Hearing Exhibit No. 7.

19 [WHEREUPON, Hearing Exhibit No. 7 was
20 marked for identification.]

21 So, Commissioners, do you have any questions?

22 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Mr. Chairman?

23 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Commissioner Ervin.

24 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Thank you.

25 Mr. Meetze, you've obviously done your

1 homework and you've done your research, so I
2 commend you for that. You came prepared. We
3 appreciate your input and your statements tonight,
4 and we certainly will give everything very serious
5 consideration.

6 **WITNESS:** I would certainly appreciate the
7 consideration of those questions. I know you can't
8 answer anything, but if they could be discussed
9 prior to the meeting on the 26th, the merit
10 meeting, and we could get some answers then, it
11 would certainly be appreciated. Thank you for your
12 time.

13 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** I would encourage you to
14 talk with the members of – the people from the
15 company tonight, for clarification on those
16 questions you have.

17 **WITNESS:** Well, I think everybody needs the
18 clarification on that, sir, not just me.

19 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Okay.

20 **WITNESS:** All these people out here would like
21 to know that.

22 [Applause]

23 Thank you. Thank you.

24 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

25 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next, we have Tom Vacula,

1 followed by Bill Byrd, and we'll add Diana Lackey
2 on deck. Diana Lackey on deck, please.

3 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Ladies and gentlemen, while
4 people are talking, if you clap, it's hard for the
5 court reporter to hear what's – it's not going on
6 the record, if she can't hear it, so, if you would
7 please hold it down when you can.

8 [Witness affirmed]

9 THEREUPON came,

10 **T O M V A C U L A ,**
11 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

12 **WITNESS:** Tom Vacula.

13 I'd like to address the service that we're
14 getting from Blue Granite. I was without water on
15 January 20th and 21st, both days. I called and got
16 their answering service, probably about five times.
17 Asked for a supervisor's name and phone number;
18 they wouldn't give it to me. No one was making
19 repairs on the 20th. Finally called on the 21st,
20 the main office; called there quite a few times,
21 couldn't get a supervisor or a supervisor's phone
22 number.

23 The first excuse I got was a broken main line.
24 I traveled the neighborhood; there was no broken
25 main line. The second excuse I got was there was

no power to the pumping station. I live across the street from the pumping station. If I have power, everybody has power. So that wasn't the problem.

And when I finally went there toward the end of the day, there was a couple of men working on the pumping station, and they said that the pump was bad.

So, like I say, I live across from the pumping station. These are the excuses we get. Two days without water.

That's my statement.

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, sir.

Any questions from the parties?

[No response]

Commissioners.

[No response]

Thank you, sir, very much for your testimony.

COMMISSIONER BELSER: I do.

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Oh.

COMMISSIONER BELSER: I'm sorry.

EXAMINATION

BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:

Q Mr. Vacula, that was just a week or so ago?

A January 20th and 21st, yes.

Q And you called – what number – you called the number on

1 the bill?

2 **A** I called the number on the bill, and I got – on the
3 first day – I got their answering service.

4 **Q** Did they indicate that anybody else had reported an
5 issue, that they –

6 **A** They said they had numerous calls.

7 **Q** Okay.

8 **A** But yet nobody went to the pumping station to repair it.
9 Nobody was there.

10 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you, very much.
11 Appreciate it. We appreciate you being here.

12 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir, appreciate
13 it.

14 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

15 Ladies and gentlemen, the folks outside have
16 said there are 10 cars in the church parking lot
17 that are not supposed to be parked there. So if
18 you parked in the church parking lot, you probably
19 need to move that. Thank you.

20 Okay. Let's call the next names.

21 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Bill Byrd? Bill Byrd, followed
22 by Diana Lackey, and David Stewart, you're on deck.
23 David Stewart.

24 [Witness affirmed]

25 <

1 THEREUPON came,

2 B I L L B Y R D ,

3 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

4 WITNESS: Okay. I'm Bill Byrd. I'm President
5 of ProvaCom Ventures Corporation. We've owned and
6 operated utilities in South Carolina, the United
7 States, and internationally for decades. I've been
8 in the business a half a century.

9 I have two points on this. I've looked at
10 this and been through these type of rate hearings
11 and put together proposals for rate increases for
12 utilities in the past. Usually, what we do is we
13 look at what we need to run the utility and then we
14 double it. And we send it up to the Commission,
15 and the Commission cuts it in half, and then
16 everybody looks good. We get what we really need.
17 So I would suggest that the Commission look very
18 hard at exactly what is the amount of money these
19 people actually need and what are they doing with
20 it, because it appears they haven't been using the
21 money properly in the past, either. So look real
22 close at that and get the engineers up here to tell
23 you exactly what they're going to do with the
24 money, how they're going to spend it, where it's
25 going to go, specifically, not just hearsay –

1 somebody, "This is the amount of money we need,"
2 yada, yada.

3 The second thing that discourages me, as being
4 an executive and former chairman of a utility, I
5 notice that the company has changed names. It
6 looks like the possibility's existing – and this
7 rate increase they've asked for, to me, is
8 outrageous on any level, not even the stuff we've
9 proposed in the past. But it looks like to me that
10 they're looking to maybe, if they don't get this
11 rate increase, to use it as an excuse to declare
12 bankruptcy. You need to look real closely if this
13 is some kind of endgame they may have. A bankruptcy
14 would throw a very big curveball into the laps of
15 the ratepayers, here, what to do with a bankrupt
16 company. They would just get their funds out of
17 the company as best they could and walk away, which
18 might be the smart move, and I've done that with
19 companies, too. I've had companies go bankrupt
20 because we just didn't make any money; we spun them
21 off and got out. That might be what they're doing
22 here, too. So be very careful in consideration if
23 this is not an endgame they've got.

24 That's the two points: Is the rate increase
25 really what they need? It's half what they

1 actually need. And, secondarily, if they don't get
2 this rate increase, what's going to happen to the
3 company? Is their plans – how they established
4 this company, is it something they set up as a
5 separate company under the holding company that
6 they can spin off as a bankruptcy, or not? But
7 take a close look at that, have the attorneys take
8 a look at it. That's all I've got to say.

9 [Applause]

10 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Byrd.

11 Questions from the parties?

12 [No response]

13 Questions, Commissioners?

14 [No response]

15 **WITNESS:** No questions? None?

16 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

17 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

18 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

19 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Diana Lackey? Diana Lackey,
20 followed by David Stewart, and Bill Danielson on
21 deck. Bill Danielson on deck.

22 [Witness affirmed]

23 THEREUPON came,

24 **D I A N A L A C K E Y ,**

25 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

1 **WITNESS:** Diane Lackey. I live in Waterford
2 subdivision, which is just outside the limits of
3 Irmo, and Blue Granite supplies me with the sewer
4 service only.

5 We have lived here two years, this month. We
6 moved here from Hilton Head. And I will tell you
7 that the – well, the combined water and service was
8 so much cheaper there, they only billed us four
9 times a year.

10 **VOICE:** Amen.

11 **WITNESS:** That's how little it was. I
12 believe, if I'm not mistaken, this is the third
13 request in three years for the rate increase? My
14 husband and I are retired. Two of us in the house.
15 The house is about 3000 square feet, roughly, if
16 you count the sunroom. And we've had the same
17 thing as the house next door that has like 112
18 people living in it.

19 [Laughter]

20 I just – I don't understand. It's the first
21 place I have ever lived in my life – and I've lived
22 in a lot of places – where sewer was not somehow
23 measured commensurate to the water usage. My water
24 bill, through the City of Columbia, was like \$25
25 this month. How can sewer be \$65, \$67, whatever it

1 is we're paying?

2 So my question to Blue Granite is: When you
3 first came here to South Carolina to get into the
4 utility business – my understanding is a part of
5 this humongous rate increase is for the maintenance
6 of our shabby infrastructure for sewer and water
7 facility – did your company not know what kind of
8 shape the facilities were in –

9 **VOICE:** Amen.

10 **WITNESS:** – before y'all took it over? And
11 now you want to charge us out the wazoo to try to
12 make that up? I think the gentleman that spoke
13 before me spoke the truth on point number two. And
14 I would like for the PSC to really listen hard and
15 think hard about what that last gentleman just
16 said, because I think he's onto something. And
17 that's all I have to say.

18 [Applause]

19 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Lackey.

20 Questions from the parties?

21 [No response]

22 Commissioners? Commissioner Belser.

23 **EXAMINATION**

24 **BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:**

25 **Q** Ms. Lackey, thank you for being here and thank you for

1 your testimony. You characterize the infrastructure as
2 "shabby." Have you had issues in the neighborhood? If
3 so, could you describe them?

4 **A** No, I've had no issues, and that's the reason I read in
5 some of the local papers that part of the reason they
6 were asking – Blue Granite was asking – for these
7 increases, this humongously high increase, was because
8 of the state of the water treatment facilities and the
9 sewer facilities that they're having to operate with,
10 and that they're having to expend all these funds to
11 upgrade them, to repair them. And my question is,
12 what – you know, did nobody in the company check to see
13 what they were buying or getting into before they got
14 into it?

15 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you, very much.
16 Appreciate you being here.

17 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Lackey.
18 Appreciate your testimony.

19 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

20 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Up next, we have David Stewart,
21 followed by Bill Danielson, and Jake Moore on deck.
22 Jake Moore, to the front, please.

23 [Witness affirmed]

24 <

25 <

1 THEREUPON came,

2 D A V I D S T E W A R T ,

3 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

4 WITNESS: David Stewart. I live in
5 Coatesworth.

6 I signed up to say something tonight, and I
7 wasn't sure I was going to say anything. But then
8 I thought differently. I am not a customer of Blue
9 Granite. However, I am a customer of the City of
10 Columbia. And I would hope that the people here
11 tonight who are fighting against this rate
12 increase, if there is a future increase from the
13 City of Columbia for my water and my sewer, that
14 they'll have my back, because I have theirs.

15 I've been here in this State for over 35
16 years. It seems like every year that Carolina
17 Water was here, there was some controversy about
18 what the heck they got away with. It looks to me
19 like that the company that took over is kind of
20 like a brother from another mother?

21 [Laughter]

22 The names have been changed. Somewhere along
23 the line, someone has failed to understand that a
24 company that wants a 10 percent return is obscene
25 when there are other ways to earn your money

besides hitting the ratepayers.

Now I don't know what their tax forms say, what their expenses versus their profit has been the last few years, but I will wager what's in my pocket right now that they really haven't explored the alternatives in the private bond market to see how they can pad the kind of money that they're trying to ask from all these people that are seated behind me.

I think it might be something that the Commission would want to look at and make sure that the rates that they want are commensurate with the expenses, notwithstanding all the things that they're going to do in their new headquarters up in Greenville that they want these people to pay for. I think it's incumbent upon this Commission and the Intervenor to make sure that they fight on behalf of the people who are – it looks, unfortunately – going to have to pay the bulk of that 10 percent ROI.

For those who are interested, the slogan on my shirt is Hawaiian. It means "Ku'a." It means "resist."

[Applause]

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Mr. Stewart.

Questions of the parties?

[No response]

Commissioners.

[No response]

Thank you, sir.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

MR. BOCKMAN: Next we have Bill Danielson, followed by Georgia Coffey and Morris L. Bays, Jr. Georgia Coffey and Morris Bays.

VOICE: Senior.

MR. BOCKMAN: Senior? Fair enough.

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

B I L L D A N I E L S O N ,

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: Bill Danielson. Hey, Randall, good to see you.

I want to look at the big picture, here. I appreciate you being here tonight. You've heard enough numbers already to boggle the mind, but I want to look at it from a larger picture. I've been a businessman in this community for 30 years, specializing in finance, real estate, broker's license, own a payroll company currently. But as an ex-banker, 10.7 percent is a pretty good return

1 on any business I've ever seen.

2 The issue here is not the 10.7 percent as much
3 as it's an open-ended 10.7 percent, which basically
4 means whatever the contract is, there's no tie to
5 the contract. It doesn't include overruns. They
6 can overrun and go beyond budgets, and then still
7 add 10.7 percent. So, really, we don't know what
8 that number is.

9 The bigger picture is what is this going to do
10 to the community? The people in this community,
11 the citizens in this community, all on fixed
12 budgets – a lot of them are. They are all
13 threatening and probably having to move out. This
14 is a very simple situation. It is going to cause
15 harm to older citizens. It is going to force some
16 to move, which will then have a very detrimental
17 impact on the real estate market. It's going to
18 plummet people's house values. It's going to do a
19 lot of things to Irmo that we really do not want to
20 see.

21 [Applause]

22 Irmo is a beautiful town. It is a great town.
23 We are striving to make it an even better town.
24 But I can promise you, in some of these suburbs, if
25 you glut this market with for-sale signs, everyone

1 loses. Everyone in this market is going to lose.
2 Everyone in this community is going to lose.

3 So I would just urge you all to think about
4 the big picture. This is just the beginning with
5 Blue Granite. I've been a Carolina Water/Blue
6 Granite consumer for a long time. What are they
7 going to do with the infrastructure that they have?
8 Most businesses go out and make the improvements.
9 If I'm a tenant in a building, that building
10 owner's going to repair that building, then he's
11 going to raise my rent.

12 **VOICE:** That's right.

13 **WITNESS:** Right? He's not going to come to me
14 and say, "Hey you better give me \$4 million while I
15 play with your \$4 million."

16 **VOICE:** That's right.

17 **WITNESS:** Listening to the president of this
18 company just a week or so ago, he readily admitted
19 he can't go 10 feet with a camera in a sewage pipe
20 without it stopping. What does that – how is that
21 going to be repaired with \$4 million. It's not.
22 We have sludge, we have sewerage, we have all of
23 that, flooding our neighborhoods, our rivers. It
24 has to stop. This company has to be held
25 accountable for what they've done and what they've

1 taken on. They might have bought somebody else's
2 problem, but it's called due diligence. In the
3 real estate market, we practice due diligence every
4 day.

5 And I appreciate you all being out here, and
6 thank you very much.

7 [Applause]

8 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Danielson.
9 Any questions from the parties? Questions.

10 [No response]

11 Commissioners, questions.

12 [No response]

13 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** If –

14 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir.

15 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** – I – Mr. Danielson.

16 **WITNESS:** Yes.

17 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you.

18 **WITNESS:** Yes, ma'am.

19 **EXAMINATION**

20 **BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:**

21 **Q** You made a statement and attributed it to the president
22 of Blue Granite. Where did you hear that?

23 **A** Town Council meeting here just a week or so ago.

24 **Q** Thank you, very much.

25 **A** Thank you.

1 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Danielson.

2 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

3 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next, we have Georgia Coffey,
4 followed by Morris Bays, Sr. Julius Waites is on
5 deck.

6 [Witness affirmed]

7 THEREUPON came,

8 **G E O R G I A C O F F E Y ,**

9 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

10 **WITNESS:** My name is Georgia Coffey. I live
11 in the Rose Oaks subdivision.

12 I didn't think I was going to speak, but after
13 hearing all this, my big concern is we've only
14 lived here two years, and I'm shocked at the rates
15 and I'm shocked at the whole concept of this not
16 being tied to the amount of water coming in versus
17 the amount of water going out. And what I've been
18 reading in the paper kind of smacks as something
19 almost as egregious as the nuclear disaster a
20 couple of years ago. The fact that Carolina Water
21 Service was caught polluting the rivers and spent
22 tons of money fighting the EPA over the fines, and
23 lost, and expects all their clients, all their
24 consumers, to pay for their losses, and their
25 losses were caused by their fact of not keeping up

1 with the infrastructure or just simply not
2 polluting the waters and keeping the facilities
3 intact. And I just don't think that changing a
4 name improves anything. And I don't think we need
5 to reward these people with more money for previous
6 bad behavior. They are just bad actors, and I just
7 don't think they have it due to them.

8 [Applause]

9 Thank you for your time.

10 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Coffey.

11 Any questions? Mr. Bateman.

12 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

13 **BY MR. BATEMAN:**

14 **Q** Ms. Coffey, I have one quick question. You mentioned
15 you didn't think that changing a name improves anything.
16 Have you noticed better service since CWS changed its
17 name from Carolina Water Service to Blue Granite?

18 **A** Not a whit of difference.

19 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

20 Commissioners?

21 [No response]

22 Thank you, Ms. Coffey, appreciate you being
23 here.

24 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

25 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next, we have Morris Bays, Sr.,

1 Julius Waites, and Pat Steadman on deck. Pat
2 Steadman, please.

3 [Witness affirmed]

4 THEREUPON came,

5 M O R R I S L . B A Y S , S R . ,
6 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

7 WITNESS: Morris Bays. I live at 142 Rock
8 Hampton Road, in New Friarsgate.

9 The Blue Granite Company, I was really
10 impressed when they said they was going to name it
11 after our State capitol, because that's what our
12 State capitol is built out of: Blue Granite. That
13 really impressed me a lot. I mean, I thought that
14 was nice of them. And I hope you think I doing
15 sarcastic when I say that; I am.

16 [Laughter]

17 But my wife and I, we live in a 1600-square-
18 foot house – 1600-and-some-few-feet-square house.
19 And I have a garden in the back. Last year, my
20 water bill was over \$100 on several occasions. And
21 every time my water bill goes up, my sewage bill
22 goes up.

23 Several years ago under the old name, they
24 come into my backyard and they put in a system –
25 I'm thinking that, if we didn't pay our bill, that

1 that there thing down in the bottom would cut off
2 and we'd have our flood in the house. But they
3 done somewhere close to 980 square feet of yard
4 work that I had to redo, and I got 100 square feet
5 from them, of grass. And I have been upset about
6 that ever since, and I can't get an answer from
7 anybody on that.

8 I called – in fact, I've stopped calling
9 because – I think about four years ago, I stopped
10 calling because it didn't seem to be going
11 anywhere. It was just a dead subject as far as
12 they're concerned. They had to bring this tractor
13 in the backyard to make a trench, in order to bury
14 this pipe. And I've cut this pipe off even with
15 the top of the ground, in order to put a cover on
16 it so I could run my lawnmower over it and not have
17 to go around it all the time.

18 But I think, like everyone else has spoken
19 originally, since before me, the rates are
20 outrageous. My daughter and son-in-law, they live
21 in a much bigger house than we do, over two and a
22 half times bigger. They want us to move in with
23 them, and we've been thinking very seriously about
24 it. The only reason I don't, because – I know I'm
25 80 years old, but I don't want to lose my

1 independence. And if I live in – you move in with
2 somebody else, you lose some of that. And I'm not
3 ready for that yet.

4 But, take into consideration what these people
5 said. Thank you.

6 [Applause]

7 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Bays. Mr.
8 Bays, hang on one second.

9 **WITNESS:** Yes, sir.

10 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Are there any questions
11 from the parties? Commissioner Belser.

12 **EXAMINATION**

13 **BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:**

14 **Q** Mr. Bays?

15 **A** Yes, ma'am.

16 **Q** Thank you for being here tonight.

17 **A** Thank you.

18 **Q** I appreciate your testimony. We all do. Do you receive
19 water service and sewer service from Blue Granite, or
20 just sewer service?

21 **A** Just sewer.

22 **Q** Just sewer, okay. You've got some company
23 representatives over here. You might want to talk to
24 them, and if they're –

25 **A** Well, I did finally get ahold of one, and I was

1 basically ignored. I sent a letter, like he asked me
2 to, and I never heard back from the gentleman.

3 **Q** And tell me when that happened.

4 **A** I'm going to say approximately four years ago. They
5 came all through New Friarsgate – am I correct when I
6 say that, about four years ago? Maybe five?

7 **Q** They'll know. About four or five years ago, okay.

8 **A** Yes, ma'am. And literally tore my backyard up with that
9 little tractor they had. And all they did was replace
10 100 square feet, which is a 10-by-10.

11 **Q** Yes, sir.

12 **A** And I had – I had over 600 square feet – 800 square feet
13 to replace.

14 **Q** That you had to pay for?

15 **A** That I had to pay for, yes, ma'am. That was above what
16 they paid for.

17 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Okay. Thank you.

18 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Mr. Ellerbe.

19 **MR. ELLERBE:** Mr. Bays, there's some different
20 people here. You might try speaking to some of
21 these folks that are here tonight.

22 **WITNESS:** Okay.

23 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Also, Mr. Bays, members of
24 the Office of Regulatory Staff – look right back,
25 he's got his hand waving? That's a good person to

1 talk with, as well, so – thank you. Appreciate
2 your testimony.

3 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

4 **COMMISSIONER WHITFIELD:** Mr. Chairman.

5 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Commissioner Whitfield

6 **EXAMINATION**

7 **BY COMMISSIONER WHITFIELD:**

8 **Q** Mr. Bays.

9 **A** Yes.

10 **Q** Over here [indicating].

11 **A** I'm sorry? I don't have my hearing aids in, I'm sorry.

12 **Q** Are you still having trouble with that, what they did
13 with your sewer in the back? Are you still having – I
14 know they tore your yard up and –

15 **A** No, I'm not have any problems with it.

16 **Q** You're not having service trouble?

17 **A** No, sir.

18 **Q** Okay.

19 **A** I'm not having any.

20 **Q** Well, again, like the Chairman said, you've got the
21 company and you've got ORS here.

22 **A** Yeah.

23 **Q** You've got a lot of resources here tonight, and we would
24 certainly encourage you to get help.

25 **A** I do have my – I've got – I'm one of the lucky ones;

1 I've got this big manhole cover in my backyard, about
2 two-and-a-half-foot circle. I do get pungent odors out
3 of it on several occasions. It's mostly during the
4 summer. And my deck being in the backyard, it depends
5 on which way the wind is blowing, you can't sit on the
6 deck. And I don't – you know, I've thought about going
7 down and put silicone around it, but then someone would
8 fuss about that.

9 **Q** Well, you've got a lot of resources here. And thank you
10 for your testimony, and I would certainly encourage you
11 to reach out to – both the company and the State are
12 both here tonight, and I would certainly – you've got a
13 lot of people here that can help you tonight. And thank
14 you for being here.

15 **A** Okay.

16 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Bays.

17 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

18 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

19 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Julius Waites, followed by Pat
20 Steadman, and Dale Davis to the front, please.
21 Dale Davis.

22 [Witness affirmed]

23 THEREUPON came,

24 **J U L I U S D . W A I T E S ,**
25 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

1 **WITNESS:** Julius Waites.

2 I'm not a customer. I served on the Irmo
3 Council four years, and I'm here representing some
4 people that called me and asked me to come and
5 speak.

6 Blue Granite was not the company here; it was
7 Carolina Water, then it was Utilities,
8 Incorporated, then it became Blue Granite.

9 The 21st, at the Irmo Town Council meeting,
10 Don Denton, President of Blue Granite was here, and
11 he did state that the infrastructure of the sewer
12 system in New Friarsgate was in terrible condition
13 and, as someone said, you could put a camera in and
14 only go maybe 10 or 15 feet, and that was it, that
15 the roots were growing through the sewer lines.
16 Some sewer lines were turning back on themselves,
17 and they would have to be redone. He also said
18 that Corix Regulated Utilities is the parent
19 company, in North Carolina. And under Blue Granite
20 there's something called ClearWater Solutions; it's
21 the contract operator of the sewer plants. With
22 all these different utility companies, no wonder
23 they can't get anything done.

24 I also want to comment and thank you all for
25 coming, because you folks are going to catch all

1 the hell, and you're not responsible. You are
2 appointed by our State Legislature. They make the
3 laws that you are stuck with enforcing, just like
4 SCE&G when Westinghouse had declared bankruptcy.
5 And I have personal knowledge that they bought
6 Chicago Iron & Bridge Works to the tune – I forget
7 what the amount was, but they didn't realize the
8 books had been cooked, to the tune of \$3 billion.
9 The parent company of Westinghouse is Toshiba
10 Electronics in Japan. But our residents of South
11 Carolina are going to catch the grief.

12 I've lived in Richland County soon to be 75
13 years. When I lived in the City of Columbia, my
14 water bill and sewer bill were together. Whatever
15 came in, went out. Until I got a pool and put a
16 sprinkler system in. Then it changed. Water bill
17 went up, sewer bill went up. Well, some of that
18 water wasn't leaving. Who made that law? Our
19 State Legislature gave them the right to do that,
20 and the State Legislature also gives utilities the
21 right to a certain amount of profit. And they can
22 pass any fines they get on to the consumer.
23 Dominion Energy just lost that privilege in
24 Virginia. The State of Virginia's public service
25 commission, through their legislature, took that

1 away. But in South Carolina, the fine can be
2 passed on to us.

3 Catherine Heigel, who used to be in DHEC, went
4 to work for Blue Granite to straighten things out.
5 Catherine resigned.

6 Thank you.

7 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Waites.
8 Any questions from the parties?

9 [No response]

10 Commissioners, any questions?

11 [No response]

12 Thank you, sir, appreciate it.

13 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

14 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Pat Steadman, followed by Dale
15 Davis and Pamela Burton. Pamela Burton is on deck.

16 [Witness affirmed]

17 THEREUPON came,

18 **P A T S T E A D M A N ,**

19 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

20 **WITNESS:** My name is Pat Steadman.

21 I came up here, basically, to – but most of
22 the points have already been made, and they're very
23 valid. But my personal opinion – and I think they
24 kind of proved it to themselves that it's a highly
25 incompetent company. They've had many spills.

1 Also, last July, I'm sitting there at my computer
2 desk one morning and just happened to notice out of
3 the corner of my eye there's an orange shirt
4 walking in my backyard. I'm like, "What's he
5 doing?" He goes back there, pulls the cap off my
6 sewer. And I'm watching him. He sticks a long
7 pole down in it. Finally, I go out there and ask
8 him, "What are you – what are you doing?" He
9 said – I startled him. He said, "I'm sorry, sir.
10 I'm at the wrong address." He said, "Everything
11 will be fine in about 10 minutes." And I said,
12 "Well, everything was fine before you got here."

13 [Laughter]

14 Okay. Not end of story. I didn't really
15 think no more about it. About 8:30 that night, my
16 daughter took a shower upstairs. I'm at the
17 computer desk again. I hear gurgling. I'm like,
18 "What is that?" I go in, both of my downstairs
19 toilets have overflowed – toilet paper, everything
20 come back in my house.

21 Of course, I called Blue Granite. Eight-
22 thirty at night, guess what. Answering service.
23 So I said, "Okay." I said, "This might be a good
24 thing. I've had time to cool off a little bit to
25 call them in the morning," which I did. I asked

1 the lady who answered the phone, I said, "Is there
2 any particular reason y'all plugged my sewer?" And
3 I gave her my account number and all that, and
4 she — a long hesitation. "Uh, no, sir. Why?" I
5 said, "Because my downstairs is flooded, and it's
6 not water," plain water. She put me on someone
7 else, and she agreed the same thing. Then they put
8 me on — I don't know who. Third was a gentleman
9 that time. He said, "Well, we'll get somebody on
10 it right now." I said, "Well, it's pouring down
11 rain outside." I said, "Is that going to affect
12 you coming and unplugging my sewer?" "No." I
13 said, "Okay."

14 Well, the guy came out. He unplugged it, and
15 still swore up and down he hadn't plugged it. And
16 I said, "You want me to show you what you didn't
17 plug?"

18 Yes, after four and a half months they have
19 repaired my house, and it's up to par. I'm
20 satisfied. I had mold problems, I had smell
21 problems. But my point is the company is really
22 not competent. They've had many spills, polluting
23 our lakes and rivers. I don't know. It's up to
24 y'all. And we do appreciate y'all being here.

25 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Steadman.

Parties, questions?

[No response]

Commissioners?

EXAMINATION

BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:

Q Mr. Steadman, when did this incident happen?

A Last July.

Q July of 2019.

A Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And it was Blue Granite at that time.

Q And they –

A It took about four and a half months to get everything –

Q Did you have an elder valve that they screw down to plug your –

A I don't know what – he – the guy that was out there swore up and down he hadn't even plugged it. I said, "Do you want me to show you?" And I brought him in the house.

Q Okay.

A And he took pictures. And, you know, my carpet – it was ruined, obviously. I mean, the molding, the floor molding, all that had to be replaced. Cabinets had to be replaced.

Q All right. I appreciate your testimony tonight. Thank you.

1 **A** Thank you.

2 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Steadman.

3 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

4 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Dale Davis, followed by Pamela
5 Burton and Erik Sickinger. Dale Davis, Pamela
6 Burton, Erik Sickinger.

7 [Witness affirmed]

8 THEREUPON came,

9 **D A L E D A V I S ,**

10 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

11 **WITNESS:** Dale Davis.

12 Thanks for listening to us. I moved to the
13 Irmo area probably about 10 years ago, from the
14 northeast side of town. And at that time, my sewer
15 bill was paid quarterly, and it was probably a
16 fourth of what I'm paying – the \$65 I'm paying now.

17 My not-question, but my statement is: We need
18 to have another choice. I mean, why do we have to
19 be with Blue Granite for our sewer? I only have
20 sewer with them. My water bill is usually about
21 \$25 and then I pay \$65 to them. If they get this
22 increase, my sewer bill is going to go over \$100.

23 I brought my friend with me. She's not with
24 Blue Granite, but she lives one mile down the
25 street from me, and she's on both City water and

sewer. So, I don't understand why I couldn't do that, why I can't go – I've seen every subdivision, it seems like, in Irmo, they're just spotted.

So that's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

Any questions – Ms. Davis, hang on a second. Any questions from the parties? Commissioners?

MR. MOORE: I have a –

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Mr. Moore.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BY MR. MOORE:

Q How does your sewer bill –

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Mr. Moore, we need to get you on a mic.

MR. MOORE: I got it [indicating].

BY MR. MOORE:

Q How does your sewer bill – is it on [indicating]? How does your sewer bill compare to your friend's sewer bill, getting sewer from the City of Columbia?

A I don't know. I think –

VOICE: My last one was \$75, but I have a 4000-square-foot house and I had 14 people in there for the holidays.

WITNESS: And I live in a 1200-square-foot patio home, and it's just me. I'm retired.

1 **MR. MOORE:** Thank you.

2 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

3 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

4 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next we have Pamela Burton.

5 Pamela Burton, followed by Erik Sickinger and Edgar
6 Hedgecock. Edgar Hedgecock to the deck, please.

7 [Witness affirmed]

8 THEREUPON came,

9 **P A M E L A B U R T O N ,**

10 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

11 **WITNESS:** Pamela Burton.

12 I just want to say, I come to the meeting and
13 I wouldn't speak, but this time I think I need to
14 let my voice be heard, because this is ridiculous.
15 You know, for them to get a rate increase and we're
16 sitting home – I'm sure there's a lot of people
17 behind me. You got to look in both of your hands
18 and ask the Lord, "Should I pay my sewer bill or
19 should I go to the grocery store?" You don't know
20 which one to do, because they're always asking for
21 a rate increase. And you call and try to get your
22 bill where you can make arrangements on it, it's
23 always somebody smart, you know. And I'm saying,
24 if they not acting smart toward you, you're on hold
25 for a long time. And I'm at work, and that causes

1 a problem because I have incoming calls from people
2 that I have to answer. But I'm still trying to
3 handle business. And this rate increase just keep
4 going and keep going. I got a disabled husband, so
5 I'm really the sole moneymaker in the house, but
6 trying to buy his medicine, my medicine, and keep
7 these bills going, it's very hard. And I don't see
8 the reason for the rate increase. What are we
9 getting out of it? What are they doing with the
10 money? I know you can't answer the question, but I
11 beg and I plead with you all to help us. We need
12 the help, as the customer.

13 And I don't think I would move, but if it keep
14 going up, something's going to have to happen.
15 Y'all are going to have to help us dig deep.
16 Somebody gonna have to come out their pocket with
17 some money, because we ain't gonna have it, if they
18 keep taking from us.

19 So that's my concern. And I've heard a lot of
20 good things said tonight. And with those things
21 being said, I hope you all will take it into
22 consideration for us.

23 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Burton.

24 Any questions from the parties? Mr. Bateman.

25 <

CROSS EXAMINATION**BY MR. BATEMAN:**

Q Thank you, Ms. Burton, for being here. If I may seek clarification, when you said you called in and someone was being smart, what do you mean by that?

A What I mean by that, it's been times I've had to call because I might've missed two payments, going into the third payment. And I remember one time, I actually laughed with the guy. I said, "You know, I got to flush my toilet." He laughed, I laughed. I said, "So are you going to give me an arrangement now?" He said, "I'll see what I can do." But I don't know whether that joke got him to do it, or what, but I was being dead serious about it. But it's been times where you get people that's so short with you, you know, they don't have patience. And I deal with people every day; whether I like it or not, I got to smile and I got to do what I got to do on my job.

Q Thank you, Ms. Burton.

A You welcome.

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Ms. Burton.

Any other questions?

[No response]

Thank you, ma'am.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

1 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Erik Sickinger, followed by
2 Edgar Hedgecock and Chris Kessler. Chris Kessler
3 to the deck.

4 [Witness affirmed]

5 THEREUPON came,

6 **E R I K S I C K I N G E R ,**
7 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

8 **WITNESS:** Erik Sickinger. I represent not
9 only myself as a ratepayer, but also 1400
10 ratepaying customers in the Town of Irmo as an Irmo
11 Councilman.

12 I've prepared remarks, so they won't be off-
13 the-cuff.

14 I have never seen a business rewarded so
15 frequently and so often for failure like this wing
16 of the Corix Companies, as they've been rewarded by
17 PSC over the last three to five years. Let there
18 be no confusion; this is a bailout at the expense
19 of the ratepayer. Much like other bailouts, it
20 results in the everyday citizen paying out of
21 pocket while affording the company a life raft for
22 profit, excusing the previous failures – like
23 polluting our waterways, the failed Friarsgate
24 plant, mismanagement of assets – and providing an
25 outlet and funds for extravagant expenditures.

1 This rate hike request represents an
2 existential threat to many of my constituents and
3 an existential threat to every single one of the
4 fixed-and low-income ratepayers for Blue Granite.

5 The history of this wing of the Corix
6 Companies polluting our waterways is well-
7 documented. Other people can talk about that. At
8 the end of the day, they have three jobs: collect,
9 treat, and don't pollute. And they failed at that.

10 When I want to make more money, I work harder.
11 If I want to keep more money in my pocket, I spend
12 less. I don't tell the people that I work for,
13 "Well, I've mismanaged my job for the last three
14 years, so now if you want me to do my job right,
15 you better pay me more." That's essentially what
16 Blue Granite is saying to PSC. Ratepayers have
17 been paying for the proper collection and treatment
18 for years, including rate hikes, which have got us
19 to \$65 month. While those profits have been neatly
20 tucked away and paid to pensioners in Canada, all
21 the while the ratepayer has endured the pain of
22 opening the paper to see another spill, another
23 example of mismanagement, and now you want a raise?

24 This whole process of rewarding an
25 organization for all of their capital expenditures,

1 discretionary spending, mismanagement over the last
2 five years with an even larger pool of cash from
3 ratepayers is disturbing and antithetical to the
4 way businesses run anywhere outside of PSC and
5 monopoly business.

6 Was there no reserve appropriated over the
7 course of the last five years to do maintenance?
8 It didn't seem so. Was there any reserve to
9 properly manage the Friarsgate treatment plant to
10 rectify the constancy of pollution issues that
11 stand in stark juxtaposition to the Clean Water
12 Act?

13 I would ask that Blue Granite cut costs
14 elsewhere. There must be a requirement of give-
15 and-take. If you take from the ratepayers, then
16 you must say, "While we recognize the significant
17 increase in rates is prohibitive," then you must
18 cut costs as well. Discretionary spending is not
19 something that we should be paying for.

20 To that point, Blue Granite, your relocations
21 and \$500,000 in rebranding represent the complete
22 opposite of accessibility, accountability, and
23 cutting discretionary expenditures. Don't ask
24 ratepayers to set aside a portion of their bill to
25 help individuals who cannot pay. Rather, we should

1 be demanding that Blue Granite set aside a portion
2 of their funds for a reserve fund for individuals
3 who cannot pay.

4 I am concerned about the existential threat
5 that this rate hike represents. Thank you.

6 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir.

7 [Applause]

8 Parties, questions?

9 [No response]

10 Commissioners, any questions? Commissioner
11 Ervin.

12 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 **EXAMINATION**

14 **BY COMMISSIONER ERVIN:**

15 **Q** We appreciate you being here tonight and speaking out
16 and speaking up for your voters and constituents. I
17 know they appreciate your effort. Does the company have
18 a local office here?

19 **A** No.

20 **Q** Has the company ever reached out to the City or to the
21 Town and the community to make any kind of contributions
22 or be a part of the community?

23 **A** Last week was the first time, that I'm aware of.

24 **Q** All right. And that's when they came and spoke to
25 Council?

1 **A** Correct.

2 **Q** Did they express any plans to be more involved in the
3 community?

4 **A** They expressed those plans, yes.

5 **Q** Were they specific in their plans?

6 **A** No, they were not.

7 **Q** Have you asked them to consider keeping an office in the
8 area and being part of the community? Do you think that
9 would be an important consideration?

10 **A** I would think that would be an important consideration,
11 but I would prefer to not do that if that means another
12 increase to our ratepayers.

13 **Q** I understand. I appreciate your service tonight, and
14 thank you for being here.

15 **A** Thank you.

16 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

17 Any other questions?

18 [No response]

19 Thank you, sir. Appreciate your testimony.

20 **WITNESS:** I do have the remainder of my notes.

21 Can I enter them into the record?

22 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Sure. We'll take that and
23 we'll mark it as Exhibit No. 8.

24 [WHEREUPON, Hearing Exhibit No. 8 was
25 marked for identification.]

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

MR. BOCKMAN: We have Edgar Hedgecock,
followed by Chris Kessler and Katana Pakon? Katana
Pakon.

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

E D G A R H E D G E C O C K ,
who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: My name is Ed Hedgecock. I live in
Rollingwood subdivision, in Lexington. I wasn't
able to attend the Monday hearing over there;
however, I feel so strongly about the issue that I
came here tonight to speak to y'all.

I've lived in Lexington for over 30 years.
When I moved into Rollingwood with my family, the
subdivision had fire hydrants. And some time, some
point – I can't remember because it's been so long
ago – Carolina Water removed those fire hydrants.
We've never been able to get an explanation from
Carolina Water why that was done.

A little over two years ago, there was a house
fire in our subdivision. Before Lexington County
Fire Service could bring a hose in, over a quarter
mile from Old Cherokee Road, that house burned to
the ground. The elderly couple and their disabled

1 daughter lost everything; they lost their house,
2 they lost their belongings, and they lost their
3 lifelong memories.

4 Shortly after this, I attended a Carolina
5 Water public hearing in Oak Grove. I brought that
6 question up and I asked the representative what
7 were they going to do about it, what did we need to
8 do about it. After repeated e-mails and phone
9 calls, they kept saying, "We're looking into it.
10 We're looking into it." After a while, that just
11 quit. They didn't answer e-mails. When I called,
12 I didn't get a return call.

13 Then came the name change and a move to the
14 Upstate, which we are paying for, again. I [word
15 inaudible] with Blue Granite. I made a call one time; I
16 got a reply, "We're going to look into it. We'll
17 give it to our Engineering Department." I called
18 several more times; I never got an e-mail from this
19 guy. Nothing. Not a thing.

20 Rollingwood's paying the same rates as our
21 neighbor, Silver Creek, I believe. It's hard to
22 find out what each subdivision's rates is, unless
23 you really get into it. And I want to know, when
24 is Rollingwood going to get the same level of
25 service, fire hydrants, that other subdivisions

1 that Blue Granite has? How much can we already –
2 how much have we already paid over all these years,
3 that the other subdivisions are paying and we
4 haven't gotten the same level of service? We
5 should not have to face this increase until we have
6 fire protection at least equal to what the other
7 subdivisions have. Silver Creek has a fire hydrant
8 almost on every other corner. We have one on the
9 main road that doesn't work. Our families and our
10 homes are at risk every day. That's over 100 homes
11 and I don't know how many people. Probably at
12 least 200-300.

13 I thank you for considering these issues for
14 the Rollingwood citizens.

15 [Applause]

16 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir.

17 Any questions from the parties? Mr. Bateman.

18 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

19 **BY MR. BATEMAN:**

20 **Q** Mr. Hedgecock, I've got one really quick question. You
21 say the one fire hydrant you have doesn't work? Could
22 you elaborate on that a bit?

23 **A** Well, I don't know exactly why, but when they came there
24 for the fire at the house, they hooked up to it and they
25 couldn't get any water out of it. That's why they had

1 to go out to Old Cherokee Road to the nearest County
2 fire hydrant to get water.

3 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Any other questions,
4 Commissioners?

5 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Mr. Chairman?

6 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Commissioner Ervin.

7 **EXAMINATION**

8 **BY COMMISSIONER ERVIN:**

9 **Q** Have you talked with the new ownership about the fire
10 hydrants?

11 **A** Yes, I called them up and I talked to one of their
12 representatives.

13 **Q** When was that?

14 **A** It was probably like two years ago, now, because it was
15 shortly after the meeting, whenever they came in as Blue
16 Granite.

17 **Q** You never got any follow-up?

18 **A** I got one follow-up call. He said, "We're looking into
19 it. We'll turn it over to our Engineering Department."
20 I called two or three more times, and they never
21 returned my call.

22 **Q** Would you be willing to meet with them tonight and
23 discuss –

24 **A** Sure. I'd be willing to meet with them anytime.

25 **Q** They're here, and I would suggest that you do that so

1 that they can look into it and then we'll have the –

2 **A** Well, they've been looking into it for two and a half
3 years, and nothing.

4 **Q** Well, I think we may be surprised. Let's see. Let's
5 try it, a little further. If you don't, then I'd like
6 to know about it. Okay?

7 **A** I'll try that. I'll try anything. My house is at risk,
8 because I live a long way from that fire hydrant.

9 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Is there a company
10 representative who can talk with this gentleman?

11 **MR. DENTON:** Yes, sir.

12 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Thank you.

13 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir.

14 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

15 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Chris Kessler? Chris Kessler,
16 followed by Katana Pakon, and Ken Hadley. Ken
17 Hadley's on deck.

18 [Witness affirmed]

19 THEREUPON came,

20 **C H R I S K E S S L E R ,**

21 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

22 **WITNESS:** Good evening. My name is Chris
23 Kessler. I live on Compass Rose Way, in Rose Oaks.

24 And I'm here – first of all, thank you all for
25 coming here to listen to us. I don't have anything

1 really new to say that you haven't already heard.
2 I moved here from Texas a couple of years ago, so I
3 don't have a long history with Carolina Water or
4 Blue Granite.

5 I can tell you that, when I first bought my
6 house, I signed up for all the utilities. I went
7 back to Texas to sell the house. And the first
8 thing I get in the mail is a bill from Carolina
9 Water or Utilities, Inc., whatever. I'm like,
10 "What's this for?" It's your sewer. Well, I'm not
11 there. I haven't flushed a toilet, I haven't taken
12 a shower, and I'm paying a ridiculous amount of
13 water – or, sewer bill, and I haven't used any
14 water yet. That was ridiculous. Then I found out
15 we have a flat rate. I'm not accustomed to that.
16 I've lived in a lot of other communities. It's
17 what you use, you pay for. That's what I would
18 like to see here.

19 So I believe that this rate increase is
20 ridiculous. We're already being overcharged.
21 Being a retiree, a single person living in a
22 single-family home, I use the minimum amount of
23 water. I pay \$13-and-some-odd-cents to Columbia
24 for my water. I use less than 750 gallons a month.
25 So \$13 for water, and \$65? Enough. I'm retired,

1 as I said. I don't have the money to give. I'm
2 going to have to move. I don't want to do that.

3 I think that this rate increase just showed
4 unmitigated gall on their part to even request it,
5 and it's nothing but a money grab. I think they're
6 throwing something at the wall and hoping something
7 sticks and they'll get something out of it. From
8 what I've been hearing this week from different
9 meetings on TV, I've been hearing it's been 14 or
10 so years they've just had a rubberstamp. Whatever
11 they ask for, they got from the Commission. I'm
12 hoping that that's not true. I'm hoping that
13 there's another answer you can provide, besides
14 "approved." And I don't think "No" is the answer;
15 I think "Hell no" is the answer to this.
16 "Absolutely, hell no."

17 [Applause]

18 I think that you need to reject this request
19 entirely and then require – if it's in your
20 purview – to do billing by use. This situation
21 needs a hero and I'm hoping that the hero is here.
22 Thank you.

23 [Applause]

24 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Kessler.
25 Any questions from the parties?

1 [No response]

2 Thank you, ma'am.

3 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

4 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Katana Pakon? Katana Pakon, Ken
5 Hadley, and Charles Shirley. Do we have Charles
6 Shirley?

7 [Brief pause]

8 Ken Hadley, Charles Shirley?

9 [Witness affirmed]

10 THEREUPON came,

11 **K E N H A D L E Y ,**

12 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

13 **WITNESS:** My name is Ken Hadley. I live in
14 the Waterford housing development. My wife and I
15 moved here from up north 12 to 13 years ago, and we
16 located this specific area because the cost of
17 living was more fair, utilities were more fair, and
18 we thought it was a perfect place to retire.

19 We came from a community where we got
20 quarterly utility water and sewer rates, and I can
21 tell you right now that you are getting three times
22 the rate that we paid in Toledo, Ohio. You're
23 getting three times the rate that we paid in
24 Pennsylvania for three years.

25 I've owned a couple of small businesses, and I

1 know what it is to operate, make a profit, and
2 treat your customers fairly so they keep coming
3 back. I have never thought of passing these
4 ridiculous increases on to my customers.

5 We just love living in Irmo. It's probably
6 the most pleasant place that we've ever lived. But
7 I can't justify these increases that you just keep
8 passing over and over and over again. If anything
9 else, what you're doing is you are driving people
10 out of the town.

11 I feel that, with all of the testimony that
12 has been presented to you tonight, we should be
13 demanding a decrease in our bills – not an
14 increase, but a decrease. I don't believe that the
15 mismanagement and the moving costs, and all of the
16 other things that the people who have already made
17 presentations, should be passed on to Irmo
18 residents. It just is very unfair and very unjust.

19 And I thank all of you for coming here to hear
20 us.

21 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir. Thank you.

22 Any questions?

23 [No response]

24 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

25 [Applause]

1 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you very much.

2 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

3 We're going to take about a 10-minute break.
4 Our court reporter has to say every word that's
5 said, and we need to give her vocal cords a rest,
6 so we'll be back in 10 minutes.

7 [WHEREUPON, a recess was taken from 7:20
8 to 7:30 p.m.]

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** If we could get everybody
10 to start taking their seats, folks?

11 [Brief pause]

12 Okay. I'm going to ask Mr. Bockman to call
13 our next witnesses, if we could ask everyone to
14 please settle.

15 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next, we have Sue Love? Sue
16 Love to the podium, please, follow by Charles
17 Shirley and Thomas Lawhorn_[sic].

18 [Witness affirmed]

19 THEREUPON came,

20 **S U E L O V E ,**

21 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

22 **WITNESS:** Sue Love. I moved in here to South
23 Carolina in 2003. Found the people to be
24 wonderful. Found the water bill to be, monthly,
25 what I was used to paying quarterly.

1 Now, my house consists of me and two Yorkies.
2 None of us drink the water. I tasted the water; it
3 tastes terrible. And I lost one of my Yorkies when
4 I moved here in '09. I lost him due to kidney
5 disease. So, strictly bottled water. And I'm not
6 in favor of bottled water because I think that we
7 are destroying the earth.

8 But, my comment here is a concern of how can
9 anybody rationally allow a municipal company to go
10 ahead and propose rates' increases to this amount?
11 It just doesn't make sense. The State should have
12 some type of program that limits the amount of rate
13 increases. And I'm talking about percentages, and
14 all, because let's face it, if I were to go ahead
15 as a businessperson and tell my customers, "Hey,
16 I'm going to increase your rate by 27 percent," I'd
17 lose a good portion of my client base.

18 Also, I want to know if a large portion of
19 these rate increases are for bonuses for the CEOs
20 and the top executives.

21 That's all I have to say.

22 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Love.

23 Any questions from the parties?

24 [No response]

25 Commissioners?

1 [No response]

2 Thank you, very much.

3 **WITNESS:** You're welcome. Thank y'all.

4 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

5 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next we have Charles Shirley,
6 Thomas Lawhorn^[sic], and Barry Walker. Thomas
7 Lawhorn^[sic] and Barry Walker to the podium, please?

8 [Witness affirmed]

9 THEREUPON came,

10 **T H O M A S L A W H O N ,**
11 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

12 **WITNESS:** Good evening. My name is Thomas
13 Lawhon. I am from the Murray Landing subdivision,
14 which is right over here behind Publix, off of
15 Highway 6 and Irmo Drive.

16 I just recently got appointed to the board as
17 a board member for our HOA.

18 Just over a year ago, I got lucky, met the
19 love of my life, got married, and I moved down here
20 with my wife. And she lives – had bought the
21 property back around end of 2016 or early 2017.
22 And she moved in. You know, and then of course I
23 came in the picture and we got married. And the
24 first question I noticed and asked my wife, when I
25 started looking, were the bills, you know, the

1 sewer bill – I’m originally from Darlington County,
2 so there, for my neck of the woods where I’m at – I
3 was out in the country, so we had, you know, good
4 old septic tank service. And I looked at the sewer
5 bill; I just, I said, “Baby, \$65 a month for
6 sewer?” I mean, I mean, you know, I’m used to a
7 septic tank, but \$65 for sewer, was the first
8 question I had. Then I noticed the City of
9 Columbia water bill we got: \$30 a month.

10 So you tell me – look at it rationally – how
11 can you have City water for using a 1200-square-
12 foot home, City water, \$30 a month; \$65 a month for
13 sewer? And then now you want to do a rate increase
14 and put the sewer bill \$102 a month? Our light
15 bill is \$107 on average a month, off peak season,
16 when, you know, it’s not summertime when you’re
17 using more energy or wintertime using more heat.
18 But a sewer bill right there with our light bill?

19 And what’s even more sad is – I’ve heard a lot
20 of testimony tonight. My neighbor next-door, she’s
21 84, single income. Our neighbor across the street,
22 single income. Single income, my other neighbor.
23 My surroundings in that neighborhood, there’s one
24 income. They are fixed incomes. And it’s \$102 a
25 month you’re wanting to be put in the sewer? You

1 know, it's not just unfair to me, a young married
2 couple just getting our lives started good
3 together? But imagine somebody that's worked their
4 whole life, and you want to make them pay that much
5 a month for sewer? It's insane.

6 That's all I got to say. And I thank y'all
7 for taking all our comments, and I hope y'all take
8 this into consideration. Thank you.

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir. Hang on,
10 let me see if there are any questions.

11 Any questions from the parties?

12 [No response]

13 Commissioners?

14 [No response]

15 Thank you very much for being here.

16 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

17 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Up next is Barry Walker,
18 followed by Susan Lawhead and Eva O'Brian. Barry
19 Walker, Susan Lawhead, and Eva O'Brian.

20 [Witness affirmed]

21 THEREUPON came,

22 **B A R R Y W A L K E R ,**
23 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

24 **WITNESS:** Barry Walker.

25 Thank you, Commissioners. I'm Barry Walker.

1 I'm also the Mayor of Irmo, South Carolina, and I
2 want to thank you all for coming here tonight and
3 hearing from the constituents.

4 Y'all heard all night that we want, what I
5 call, truth in billing. People are paying \$25 for
6 water service and they're paying \$65 for sewer
7 service, and now they're proposing to go to \$100 a
8 month.

9 The biggest thing for us, that I'm hearing
10 from my constituents, is that they're not giving
11 them truth in billing, which means they're paying
12 for the volume that they're using. It's a fixed
13 rate and that's hurting them.

14 More importantly, I understand that Blue
15 Granite now doesn't process sewage anymore.
16 They're simply pumping it to the City of Columbia
17 and letting them process it. So if they're doing
18 that and they're not doing anything extra to
19 process the sewer, the rate increase is certainly
20 questionable, especially when coming from our
21 neighborhood, my 1400 residents.

22 What they're proposing right now will take
23 about \$141,000 a month out of my community, and
24 that's a lot of money to be taken from the lady who
25 has \$25 a month water bill, the single parents that

1 are out here trying to make ends meet. We want you
2 to consider that when looking at their rate
3 increase. What are they doing with that? What are
4 they – what are we getting in return? Are they
5 getting a better sewer service? Are they
6 processing more sewer? Well, we know that those
7 two things is not true. We have citizens out here
8 that will testify in a little while that they're
9 doing a lot of construction or maintenance in
10 people's backyards. Their backyards are tore up.
11 I mean, literally, holes, pipe infrastructure going
12 in, and these people are not getting their
13 backyards repaired. And this is from the Blue
14 Granite Company – I guess, their representative.
15 Those things need to be taken into consideration.

16 But, again, I thank you for coming here
17 tonight and listening to us.

18 Oh, one more thing. Is there a fund set up
19 from Blue Granite to help the people that are in
20 need, the people that can't pay their bills? That
21 was another question that one of my councilmembers
22 brought forward, and I hope that there is, or would
23 be. I don't know if there's – like the other
24 utility companies has, to help them. But thank
25 you.

1 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Mayor, thank you for being
2 here. Let me ask if there are any questions of the
3 parties?

4 Mr. Moore.

5 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

6 **BY MR. MOORE:**

7 **Q** Mr. Barry, could you explain to them the difference in
8 the sewer rate now being charged, compared to the sewer
9 rates from, say, the City of Columbia and the other
10 utilities that provide sewer in the area?

11 **A** Well, Mr. Moore, I'm not happy with the City of Columbia
12 either.

13 [Laughter]

14 But I can tell you that, out of the 1400 people
15 that live in the Friarsgate community – and I'm just
16 going to do some quick math – and you're talking about
17 \$101 a month, and that's compared to what they're
18 getting now, okay? Hold on a second [indicating]. Now
19 they're paying \$91,000 a month from our community; they
20 want 141 now, proposed. So again, I don't know how much
21 infrastructure repair they have to do, but \$141,000 –
22 but \$50,000 a month for infrastructure improvement seems
23 like a lot to me, and to my other 1400 residents that
24 told me, "Mr. Mayor, I got a \$25 water bill. You're
25 telling me I have to pay \$101 a month in sewer?"

1 **Q** It doesn't seem to make economic sense, does it?

2 **A** Not really. But again, if they're not processing it
3 anymore, they're pumping it to the City of Columbia, we
4 can do that.

5 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We
6 appreciate you being here tonight and speaking.

7 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

8 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** And we appreciate you
9 letting us be here.

10 [Applause]

11 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

12 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Susan Lawhead? Susan Lawhead,
13 followed by Eva O'Brian and Ellus Burns. Susan
14 Lawhead, Eva O'Brian, and Ellus Burns, if you could
15 head to the podium, please?

16 [Brief pause]

17 If not, I will continue the names. Clint
18 Scoville, Vince Vaccaro, Rosamond Taube?

19 [Witness affirmed]

20 THEREUPON came,

21 **V I N C E V A C C A R O ,**

22 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

23 **WITNESS:** My name is Vince Vaccaro. I'm here
24 representing my mother-in-law who lives in the
25 Stonegate subdivision. Haven't heard anyone

1 mention the Stonegate subdivision yet tonight.

2 But the last time I was here, a month ago, I
3 brought pictures with me from the previous week on
4 December 3, 2019, where we actually opened up the
5 faucet and had brown, dirty, disgusting water. I
6 pitched the question to each of you as you left – I
7 know the Mayor was up there, as well – that when
8 you go home tonight and you go to shower, wash your
9 hands, cook, clean, do anything, to think about the
10 pictures that you saw that I brought. And is your
11 water going to do that? Because that's what we do
12 every single day. We don't know if it's going to
13 come out brown, we don't know if it's going to be
14 able to be drunk, or drank. We can't cook with it,
15 can't clean with it, can't even wash your dishes.

16 Now I want to put in perspective, which I know
17 a couple of people have, the cost of what it's
18 going to take and how much that rate hike actually
19 is in dollars. I know one other gentleman did
20 this.

21 This is taking my mother-in-law's lowest bill
22 from August of 2019. I do want to say beforehand
23 she has no lawn sprinklers, she does not wash her
24 car. She runs two loads of laundry a week, and
25 only runs the dishwasher once. Her sewer bill was

1 \$65.08; the water bill was \$21.31. If you take the
2 sewer 56 percent hike on top of everything else
3 that's going to be hiked on there, it's going to
4 add another \$36 a month and the water 45 percent
5 will be roughly about \$10. Again, that's on the
6 low end of the bill. A single person in the house
7 doesn't use that much more, which roughly is going
8 to be about \$46 extra a month. That's going to put
9 her bill to about \$135-\$140 a month, one person.

10 I live two miles down the road with my wife
11 and two kids. Our average sewer-and-water bill a
12 month is \$80. I run sprinklers, I wash cars. I
13 run six loads of laundry per week, and I run the
14 dishwasher three times.

15 So, again, to what many people have said, the
16 hike just doesn't make sense. It's so hard on a
17 single or fixed family income. There's a gentleman
18 who shed tears up here shortly ago, who doesn't
19 want to lose his independence. But this company is
20 aiming for that.

21 You have an opportunity to not let that happen
22 to the citizens of Irmo, who, some of them, have
23 been here for almost 80 years of their life. You
24 know, it's something that we don't have a choice –
25 I know one another lady said it. We don't have a

1 choice. I have City of Columbia water. Seem to be
2 fine with it. But we don't even get, right now,
3 what we pay for. The quality is not good. Again,
4 we don't know when we go [indicating] – like that –
5 [3-minute signal]

6 – if it's going to be brown, if we can cook
7 with it, or clean with it. The quality of service
8 is not even close to what we pay for now, and then
9 to have to add money on top of it? That just
10 doesn't make sense. Thank you.

11 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, sir.

12 Any questions from the parties?

13 [No response]

14 Commissioners, any questions?

15 [No response]

16 Thank you, sir, appreciate you being here.

17 [Applause]

18 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

19 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Rosamond Taube? Rosamond Taube
20 up next, followed by Jim Banks, Kathy Banks, Brad
21 Kauffman?

22 [Witness affirmed]

23 THEREUPON came,

24 **R O S A M O N D T A U B E ,**
25 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

1 **WITNESS:** Hi. I'm Rosamond Taube, and I live
2 at Ricefield Plantation subdivision. I'm part of
3 the homeowners' association.

4 And we oppose the increase. Number one, the
5 consumer price index for the last three years have
6 been about 2 percent every year, and you're asking
7 for a 56 percent increase on the sewer bill? The
8 bank pays less than 2 percent. I mean, think about
9 the balance – think about the balance of what
10 they're asking, because 2 percent versus 56
11 percent, we're all just losing money like crazy to
12 absorb the cost of a fiscally irresponsible
13 company. That's it.

14 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.

15 Any questions from the parties?

16 [No response]

17 Commissioners?

18 [No response]

19 Thank you very much for being here tonight.

20 [Applause]

21 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

22 **MR. BOCKMAN:** We have Jim Banks, Kathy Banks,
23 Brad Kauffman.

24 [Brief pause]

25 If not, we'll move on. Jim Banks, Kathy

1 Banks, Brad Kauffman?

2 [Brief pause]

3 Baker Fernandez is up next, on deck, please.

4 [Witness affirmed]

5 THEREUPON came,

6 B R A D K A U F F M A N ,

7 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

8 WITNESS: Good evening. My name is Brad
9 Kauffman and I live in Southwell.

10 I have one statement and one question – and
11 actually it's not my statement; it's the
12 statement – it's the mission statement of Blue
13 Granite. And it states the mission statement: To
14 improve the quality of life for our customers and
15 communities by providing safe, reliable, and cost-
16 effective water and wastewater services while
17 promoting environmental stewardship.

18 That's the mission statement. Sounds like to
19 me you may be falling a little bit short on that.

20 The question that I have is: Please explain
21 to me Blue Granite's corporate structure. As I
22 understand it, Blue Granite Water Company and Water
23 Service Corporation – WSC – are subsidiaries of
24 Inland Pacific Resources, Incorporated, which is
25 owned by – excuse me – Corix Regulated Utilities –

1 CRU – which is wholly owned by a subsidiary of
2 Corix Infrastructure, Incorporated – which is CII –
3 which is a privately held corporation owned by
4 Certain Affiliates Of British Columbia Investment
5 Management Corporation.

6 Who holds the stock in this privately held
7 company? How are the profits passed from Blue
8 Granite up the chain to each of these companies?
9 You all know everybody must have a piece of the
10 pie. That's all. Thank you.

11 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Kauffman.
12 Any questions from the parties?

13 [No response]

14 Commissioners?

15 [No response]

16 Thank you, very much.

17 **WITNESS:** Thank you, sir.

18 [Applause]

19 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

20 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Baker Fernandez, Sylvia Vice,
21 Ashley Foust. Sylvia Vice and Ashley Foust?

22 [Witness affirmed]

23 THEREUPON came,

24 **B A K E R F E R N A N D E Z ,**
25 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

1 **WITNESS:** My name is Baker Fernandez and I
2 live in Lexington, off Beechcreek Road. And Blue
3 Granite provides us with water and sewage.

4 And currently right now it is just myself and
5 my father. We take a shower each day, run dishes
6 once a week. I don't have grass to be watered. I
7 don't have a swimming pool. And right now, our
8 water and sewage are \$60 a month. With the rate
9 increase it'll be \$150 a month. That'll be higher
10 than our electric, cable, any utility we have. And
11 quite frankly, it's absurd.

12 Y'all got a water pump system and there's a
13 tree in front of it from a car hitting it about a
14 month ago. But y'all wouldn't know that, because
15 you don't ever check any of this stuff.

16 And I'm kind of fed up with the lack of
17 quality. I don't drink the water. It tastes
18 horrible. I'll drink bottled water any day of the
19 week.

20 That's all I've got to say, really.

21 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Fernandez.

22 Any questions from the parties?

23 [No response]

24 Commissioners.

25 [No response]

1 Thank you, sir.

2 **EXAMINATION**

3 **BY COMMISSIONER ERVIN:**

4 **Q** Mr. Fernandez, could you give us the approximate
5 location of that water pump that was hit?

6 **A** It's on Beechcreek Road, right off of Old Chapin, maybe
7 less than a quarter-mile.

8 **Q** And would you be willing to tell the company
9 representative about it before you leave, just so they
10 can check it and see if they can get it repaired?

11 **A** Nothing is wrong with the pump itself; there's a tree
12 blocking the entrance for them to –

13 **Q** Blocking the entrance.

14 **A** Yes.

15 **Q** To what?

16 **A** For a truck to dump or whatever the –

17 **Q** So it's a maintenance issue?

18 **A** Yes.

19 **Q** All right, thank you.

20 **A** Yeah.

21 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, very much.

22 [Applause]

23 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

24 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next, we have Sylvia Vice,
25 followed by Ashley Foust and James Bell on deck.

1 James Bell on deck, please.

2 [Witness affirmed]

3 THEREUPON came,

4 SYLVIA VICE ,

5 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

6 WITNESS: My name is Sylvia Vice.

7 I have an opposite problem of what everyone
8 else in here has. I do not live in Irmo; I live in
9 Northeast Columbia, off of Hardscrabble and Farrow
10 Road, in Farrowood subdivision. It's an older
11 subdivision with older houses. They built new
12 houses in between those houses. The houses range
13 from 1000 to 1250 square feet. It's not an
14 extravagant neighborhood. It's not the poorest
15 neighborhood, either, but it's not an extravagant
16 neighborhood.

17 I have a family of three. We have had to cut
18 costs just to afford the water bill, and I've been
19 having this problem for a high water bill for about
20 four years now. When I first moved into the
21 subdivision, it was just me. My water bill was
22 about \$30. When I had my daughter, my water bill
23 went to \$35. She got a bath two, three times a
24 day, until I went back to work.

25 When I got married, our water bill started

1 increasing to \$50, \$60. 2016, we started noticing
2 it going to \$70-something. 2017, it jumped from
3 \$80 to \$90s. 2018 to 2019, our water bill's in the
4 hundreds of dollars.

5 We check the meters ourselves. The readings
6 Blue Granite's been getting and what we're getting,
7 they differ. I don't quite understand.

8 January 11th, they said that they checked our
9 meter. The reader read was – it was different.
10 From January 11th, they checked it; it was 825,950.
11 That was the number. We checked in on January
12 29th, which was yesterday; it's only a difference
13 of 300. But yet they're saying that we used around
14 200 gallons of water per day. That's almost
15 impossible. We've had – three plumbers have come
16 to check our house in the past three years. We
17 have no leaks. We don't water our grass. That's
18 apparent. Our grass gets water when it rains. We
19 have – our grass have died. Our house needs to be
20 power washed. We haven't done that in two years
21 because of the water. We've had to give up cable
22 just to pay the water bill, so we had to get
23 something called MYTV.

24 We don't wash our cars at home. I've started
25 taking two to three loads of laundry to the

1 laundromat just to see what the difference in the
2 water bill would be. It's still high. I'm losing
3 more money by having to go to the laundromat to pay
4 for those washers, when I have a low-efficiency
5 washer at home.

6 Running the dishwasher, our dishwasher is
7 practically brand-new. I've used it a total of six
8 times and I've been in the house for 18 years.
9 We've started taking five-minute showers; we have a
10 timer. We're taking five-minute showers.

11 We cannot drink the water. We buy water. My
12 daughter has eczema. We had to buy a filter to put
13 on her shower, just to improve her skin and just to
14 wash hair. If I wash my hair –

15 [3-minute signal]

16 Oh. – I go in her bathroom. I've been having
17 these problems going back and forth.

18 November I got a water bill for \$791.22. I
19 was told it was for November and December. I
20 refused to pay it. When I called, the customer
21 service rep was nasty. "Oh, yes, you're going to
22 pay it. You used the water and that's what you're
23 gonna do." "No, I'm not. Can you send someone out
24 to check it?" Going back and forth, back and
25 forth. They've checked it, no leaks.

1 No one has checked – has read our meter in
2 eight months. Our camera is right on the meter.
3 We've reviewed it. It says someone came on January
4 11th at 3 o'clock. We didn't see anybody. We went
5 back to 12 o'clock, 12 to 8 p.m. Nobody. We've
6 seen cars passing by. We know those people; they
7 live in the neighborhood. Kids were playing in
8 front of it. Not unless one of the kids – they
9 gave one of the kids something to check. We didn't
10 see it.

11 Our camera also has night vision. So I don't
12 know how it's being checked, how it's being read.
13 But for 223 gallons of water per day, I don't know
14 what we'd have to do. We can't do that. Brushing
15 our teeth – cut the water on, wet your toothbrush,
16 brush your teeth, cut it on right quick, take a
17 swish, and cut it off. Cooking, I can't cook with
18 water. If I cook rice, I have to let the water
19 boil first; then I'll put the rice in the pot.

20 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Rice – Vice.

21 **WITNESS:** Vice.

22 **EXAMINATION**

23 **BY COMMISSIONER ERVIN:**

24 **Q** Ms. Vice, can I ask a question?

25 **A** Uh-huh.

1 **Q** Have you been in contact with the Office of Regulatory
2 Staff? There's a gentleman in the back at the door.

3 **A** I don't know. Is the Office of Regulatory Staff in
4 Irmo? Because I don't live in Irmo.

5 **Q** No, it's – they're here tonight. So, would you talk
6 with them on your way out?

7 **A** Yes.

8 **Q** He can help you look into this matter.

9 **A** Office of Regulatory Staff?

10 **Q** Yes, ma'am.

11 **A** Okay.

12 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Raise your hand for her.
13 He's right behind you.

14 **WITNESS:** Okay. Thank you, I will.

15 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** If you'd like to – okay?

16 **WITNESS:** Okay.

17 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** Thank you. Good luck.

18 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you, Ms. Vice.

19 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Any other questions?

20 [No response]

21 Thank you, ma'am.

22 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

23 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Next, we have Ashley Foust,
24 followed by James Bell and Frankie Delk. Ashley
25 Foust, James Bell, Frankie Delk.

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

J A M E S B E L L ,

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: My name is James Bell.

I actually can answer your question from earlier. I own two homes – one is in Spring Lakes subdivision, Blue Granite Water service. If I don't turn on the faucets, \$85 a month. My other home's with City of Columbia, where I've been spending most of my time, and the last water bill was \$54, water and sewer.

MR. MOORE: Water and sewer.

WITNESS: Yes. Water and sewer at one, if I don't touch the water – in fact, consumption was 72 gallons over the holidays.

Several people have mentioned the change of ownership of, now, Blue Granite, previously Carolina Water Service. I've looked into this before. Carolina Water Service or Blue Granite, they're a subsidiary – or were – of Utilities, Inc. Then, as someone else had mentioned, Utilities, Inc., is owned by Corix Utilities, and they're also owned by the company up in British Columbia, Investment Management Corporation. They pride

1 themselves on their earnings. They say they've
2 outperformed all of the benchmarks for the
3 corporations of similar profits. They have assets
4 under management that have gone from – was it
5 \$121.9 billion in 2016, to \$153.4 billion in 2019.

6 So I'd like you to consider their \$30 billion
7 increase in the last two years in their assets
8 under management, before granting them a way to
9 generate more assets out of all of the people here
10 who are trying to get by on fixed incomes.

11 That's pretty much all I had to say. Thank
12 you for your time.

13 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Bell.

14 Any questions from the parties?

15 [No response]

16 Commissioners, any questions?

17 [No response]

18 Thank you very much for being here.

19 [Applause]

20 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

21 **MR. BOCKMAN:** We have Frankie Delk. Frankie
22 Delk? Karen Caddell, Vanessa Torres. Karen
23 Caddell and Vanessa Torres.

24 [Witness affirmed]

25 <

1 THEREUPON came,

2 K A R E N C A D D E L L ,

3 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

4 WITNESS: Karen Caddell.

5 I wasn't going to talk, so I don't have
6 papers, so I have to use my phone. I'm sorry. I
7 don't really have anything to add that you haven't
8 heard over and over about the company, the expense,
9 the fixed income, the quality of service.

10 But their pollution history for the river is
11 pretty amazing, what they did for so long. And
12 then when finally the Riverkeeper sued them for
13 violation of the federal Clean Water Act, that went
14 on for six years. So for six years, they tried to
15 weasel out of their responsibility for dumping
16 sewer into the Saluda River. And then they wanted
17 the ratepayers to pay for their legal fees. And
18 y'all were okay with that, but I think the ORS
19 reeled you in on that.

20 So they gained a lot of money during that time
21 when Judge Seymour fined them. She talked about –
22 there was a name to it, and I – along the lines of
23 economic benefit or something, but she took a four-
24 year period of the 20 years that they had the
25 pollution history, and she gave it a figure. And

1 that was the money that they gained by not doing
2 what they were supposed to do to keep from
3 polluting. So for 20 years, they did that. So if
4 you took that one increment and multiply out, they
5 made a ton of money by not doing what they were
6 supposed to do, and then struggled against owning
7 it, owning their negligence, and then they just
8 pass it on to the ratepayers over and over and
9 over.

10 So at some point, enough is enough. And
11 people are right when they say that people are
12 going to move away. You just kind of have to cut
13 your losses.

14 But here's the thing, y'all are supposed to be
15 watching out for us. Your mission statement is:
16 To serve the public of South Carolina by providing
17 open and effective regulation and adjudication of
18 the State's public utilities through consistent
19 administration of the law and regulatory process.

20 [3-minute signal]

21 So I'd like for you to do that.

22 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.

23 Questions for Ms. Caddell?

24 **WITNESS:** And 10.7 percent for their
25 shareholders?

1 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.

2 **MR. ELLERBE:** No questions.

3 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Any questions from the
4 Commissioners?

5 [No response]

6 Thank you, Ms. Caddell.

7 [Applause]

8 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

9 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Vanessa Torres? Vanessa Torres,
10 Pat Witt, M. Kim Parker. Pat Witt or M. Kim
11 Parker. Christina Brundage?

12 [Witness affirmed]

13 THEREUPON came,

14 **P A T R I C I A W I T T ,**

15 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

16 **WITNESS:** Hi. My name is Patricia Witt, and I
17 live in Friarsgate. I have lived there for 20
18 years. I moved down from the Chicago area,
19 prompting from my sister, because I was getting too
20 old to shovel snow. And I just retired this past
21 year, after working 55 years for the Department –
22 well, I retired from Department of Health and
23 Environmental Control.

24 But I've got to tell you I worked like a dog
25 for 50 years, for everything that I have. And

1 although I've been very fortunate, more so than
2 some people, financially, I just want to mention a
3 few things to you. In my subdivision, there are a
4 lot of old senior citizens like me, people that
5 live by themselves, one income. I'm lucky; I get
6 four pensions, so I'm a lot luckier than some
7 people.

8 I did speak last week. What I want to say to
9 Blue Granite is: Please be fair to all people.
10 Please be fair. Misorganization on your part does
11 not constitute an emergency on my part.

12 I've lived in my home 20 years. The houses
13 around me have turned over eight times. Can you
14 imagine that? Looking out your window and seeing
15 your neighbors have moved eight times, for a
16 menagerie of reasons, but most recently it's been
17 because of these increases. But Friarsgate is one
18 of the communities that do have the smaller homes.
19 They have a lot of single people and retired
20 people, widows and things, in there. And I just
21 ask that you be fair to all people, and take that
22 into consideration, that you have to make a
23 priority of what you're going to pay each month.

24 I just happened this week to get an increase
25 in my car insurance, my mortgage insurance, and I

1 had another one but I forgot my glasses here – car
2 insurance – and my property tax. So in one week I
3 got three increases in the mail and, of course, I’m
4 near 70, so I’m thinking to myself, “I’m getting a
5 little overwhelmed, thinking ‘What am I going to
6 have to do? Am I going to have to move after 20
7 years because these utilities are just out of
8 sight?’”

9 But please, please listen to people, and
10 please help, and do something. And I spoke at the
11 Council meeting last week. The people don’t want
12 to be raped by a utility company, and that – and I
13 don’t mean that in a nasty way; I’m just trying to
14 get a point across. There has to be something
15 done, something at the top. There’s a lot of smart
16 people at Blue Granite. Please come up with some
17 brainstorm, please come up and figure out how you –

18 [3-minute signal]

19 – can help us, how you can go around to make
20 this bill more reasonable for a lot of people.

21 And I do thank you folks for coming tonight.

22 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Witt.

23 **WITNESS:** Oh, thank you.

24 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Any questions from the
25 parties?

1 [No response]

2 Commissioners?

3 [No response]

4 Ms. Witt, thank you very much.

5 [Applause]

6 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

7 **MR. BOCKMAN:** M. Kim Parker? Christina
8 Brundage, you're on deck with Michelle Carpenter up
9 next. Michelle Carpenter.

10 [Witness affirmed]

11 THEREUPON came,

12 **M . K I M P A R K E R ,**

13 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

14 **WITNESS:** My name is Kim Parker and I'm here
15 on behalf of my 84-year-old mother. Mr. Lawhon
16 referenced her when he spoke earlier. She lives on
17 Regency Drive, Murray Landing.

18 In 2011, her sewer bill is \$39; her water bill
19 was \$23.36. 2020, her sewer bill is \$65.08; her
20 water bill is \$25.81. We have no choice. She has
21 to have the sewer. I can't have her flush the
22 toilet once a week. We don't water her grass. She
23 bathes in the sink more often than she washes in
24 her tub. She rarely washes clothes. I don't know
25 where else to get the money from. A 1.6 percent

1 Social Security increase for 2020 is not a help.
2 So we're appealing to you to please consider the
3 fact that there are fixed-incomes. You know all
4 the figures. And that's all I really need to say.
5 Thank you.

6 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Parker.
7 Hang on a minute.

8 Any questions from the parties?

9 [No response]

10 Commissioners?

11 [No response]

12 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

13 **WITNESS:** And I have the bills to document.

14 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.

15 [Applause]

16 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

17 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Christina Brundrage – Brundage?
18 Excuse me. Michelle Carpenter and Keith Sims.
19 Michelle Carpenter and Keith Sims.

20 [Witness affirmed]

21 THEREUPON came,

22 **C H R I S T I N A B R U N D A G E ,**
23 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

24 **WITNESS:** Christina Brundage.

25 So, admittedly, I have only lived in Irmo for

1 two months. I got married to my husband in
2 November and I moved here from Lexington. We
3 bought our 1500-square-foot house back in March of
4 last year. I adore our home. It's beautiful, one
5 of our dream starter homes. However, we would have
6 never bought our home if we would have known about
7 Blue Granite. It's just the kind of company we're
8 having to deal with. We're a young couple; we're
9 just getting started with our lives. \$65.08, plus
10 \$1.99 processing fee for my card, was already
11 outrageous. Now we're going to have to pay over
12 \$100 a month? That's just absolutely mind-blowing
13 to me. Again, we're just starting with our lives.
14 We eventually want to start a family, and we have
15 to pay over \$100 for sewer?

16 I know people have said it before, but we are
17 two people who work full-time. We leave the house
18 around 6 o'clock in the morning and we get home at
19 around 6 o'clock in the evening. This is Monday
20 through Friday. How is it that we are paying so
21 much for sewage?

22 Not only do I say no to the increase, I say
23 start billing us on usage because, again, we
24 shouldn't be paying this much.

25 On the subject of Blue Granite there was an

1 interesting article published just a couple of days
2 ago by the *Post & Courier*. They are wanting us
3 to – part of this increase is for rebranding costs
4 and office expenses such as flowers, a 65-inch
5 flat-screen TV, and Chamber of Commerce dues. In
6 my opinion, with everything they've been doing, it
7 comes back to probably a very familiar quote to
8 many people: You can put lipstick on a pig, but
9 it's still a pig.

10 And that is it. That's what I got.

11 [Applause]

12 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Brundage.

13 Questions from the parties? Mr. Bateman.

14 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

15 **BY MR. BATEMAN:**

16 **Q** Ms. Brundage, I have one quick question. You mentioned
17 the kind of company you're having to deal with? Are you
18 just referencing the rates or is – what – can you
19 expound upon that a bit?

20 **A** Yes, I'm just talking about the rates.

21 **MR. BATEMAN:** Thank you.

22 **WITNESS:** You're welcome.

23 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

24 **WITNESS:** Anything else?

25 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Commissioners?

EXAMINATION**BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:****Q** Ms. Brundage – I'm sorry.**A** No, that's okay.**Q** Real quick. You mentioned a \$1.99 processing fee?**A** Yes.**VOICE:** Yes.**BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:****Q** Tell me how you're paying your bill.**A** I pay by card.**Q** Online?**A** Yes, ma'am.**Q** And they charge you \$1.99?**A** Yes, ma'am. Yep.**Q** Thank you.**A** You're welcome.**CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Brundage.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

MR. BOCKMAN: Michelle Carpenter, Keith Sims,
and Spencer Brundage on deck.

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

M I C H E L L E C A R P E N T E R ,

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: Michelle Carpenter. I live in Old

1 Friarsgate.

2 I've been here – my family's been here since
3 1983. I graduated from Irmo in 1989, joined the
4 military in 1990. I retired back here in 2011 and
5 bought my house. And now I just got really
6 nervous. I appreciate y'all coming. We got a
7 letter-writing thing started to get y'all to come,
8 and we appreciate y'all coming.

9 I don't know if y'all are aware of their
10 billing, how they bill people. When people move
11 out of houses that are in New Friarsgate, or any
12 other place, I suppose – this came about about two
13 years ago; there was about 50 people not paying.
14 And they didn't know it, and we didn't know it.
15 And it came about, and I think it's been fixed now.
16 But how can you raise our rates if you don't know
17 who you're billing? If you don't – on your list of
18 billers, don't you know when somebody moves out,
19 somebody's not – you're not billing them? I don't
20 get it.

21 Y'all need to look at that, because how can
22 you raise my bill if you're – if there's two houses
23 and somebody's moved out, or somebody's moved in
24 and they're not paying because you're not checking
25 it, I don't understand it. But that's about all

1 I've got.

2 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Carpenter.

3 Questions from the parties? Mr. Bateman.

4 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

5 **BY MR. BATEMAN:**

6 **Q** Ms. Carpenter, just one quick, clarifying question. So
7 you're saying there were 50 people living there –

8 **A** About.

9 **Q** About 50 people living there, but not being billed? Is
10 that what –

11 **A** Right, that's –

12 **Q** – you're saying?

13 **A** They weren't paying.

14 **MR. BATEMAN:** Okay. Thank you.

15 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you. Hang on one
16 second.

17 Commissioner Belser.

18 **EXAMINATION**

19 **BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:**

20 **Q** Ms. Carpenter, I just want to zero in on that, too.

21 Tell me the timeframe when that was happening, when it
22 was discovered? Do you recall?

23 **A** About two, three years ago, I guess.

24 **Q** In your subdivision?

25 **A** It is in my subdivision.

1 Q Tell me your subdivision.

2 A Oh, I'm sorry. New Friarsgate.

3 Q New Friarsgate.

4 A And my mom lives in Old Friarsgate – or – in Old
5 Friarsgate, and she doesn't even pay Blue Granite. She
6 uses the City of Columbia. And I pay City of Columbia
7 water. It's just bizarre.

8 Q And um –

9 A Sorry.

10 Q No, I'm trying to think. My question just went out of
11 my head. Thank you for being here and thank you for
12 that testimony.

13 A We appreciate y'all coming.

14 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Ms. Carpenter.

15 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

16 MR. BOCKMAN: Keith Sims, Spencer Brundage,
17 Nicole Arzu.

18 [Witness affirmed]

19 THEREUPON came,

20 K E I T H S I M S ,

21 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

22 WITNESS: Hello. My name is Keith Sims. I
23 reside in the Sylvan Street area of the Dutchman
24 Shores community outside of Chapin.

25 In the summer of 2016, we moved from less than

1 a mile down the road, from Lakeshore Drive to
2 Sylvan Street. At Lakeshore Drive, we had City of
3 Columbia water; of course, now, we have Blue
4 Granite water.

5 On Lakeshore Drive, we had a pool and four
6 occupants. Our water bill averaged about \$20-\$25 a
7 month. After the move to Sylvan Street, I shed the
8 pool and one daughter, and now, with a smaller
9 house, no pool, and three occupants, my water bill
10 averages about \$90 a month. That's an increase of
11 268 percent. It's the same water.

12 That's today. Now Blue Granite Water wants
13 another increase of upwards towards 50 percent.
14 That's got to beg the question, why would a company
15 charge 250 percent more than another company for
16 the same water? Bad management? Bad business
17 model? Too small to compete, possibly? Investor
18 greed? I think the answer is simply because they
19 can. Why? Because they have no competition. We,
20 the customer, cannot go buy water anywhere else,
21 and I believe Blue Granite Water is taking
22 advantage of that.

23 This brings us to you, our Public Service
24 Commission. We are laying this proposal squarely
25 at your feet. It's our hope that you make this

1 right. You are our only recourse.

2 On your website, you have a mission statement.
3 That mission statement lists a state – a list – has
4 a stated list of goals. Goal number two says
5 this: Seek to ensure that within a more
6 competitive utility environment that core or
7 captive customers with little market power are not
8 unduly burdened with the costs of competition and
9 are provided appropriate service and service
10 options.

11 I'd like to paraphrase that goal tonight in
12 the context of this hearing: Seek to ensure that
13 amid this request for an absurd rate increase that
14 citizens like myself and everybody else in this
15 room that are held hostage and have no other
16 options available are protected by you, the Public
17 Service Commissioners, from the company Blue
18 Granite Water and their unfair and outrageous
19 business practices.

20 So I'm urging you tonight, be the oversight
21 that is so desperately needed in the situation.
22 Uphold your goal and protect the consumer and the
23 citizens that you serve. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. Sims.

Any questions of the parties?

[No response]

Commissioners?

[No response]

Thank you, very much.

[WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

MR. BOCKMAN: Spencer Brundage, Nicole Arzu,
Andrew May. Any of those three, if you are still
here, please take the podium

[Witness affirmed]

THEREUPON came,

A N D R E W M A Y ,

who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

WITNESS: I'm Andrew May.

I want to state a couple of things, one being
I've worked with, in, and around utilities on both
coasts. We moved here in July and are loving it.
But having discovered our utility bills – in
particular, the one we get for sewer, living here
in Irmo; we live in New Friarsgate – we are
heavily, heavily considering not even living in a
city that we've otherwise come to very much enjoy.
I've got a young family. We are looking for our
home to be our home for a very long time. Both
with what City of Columbia charges for water,

1 outside of the City of Columbia, as well as what
2 we're getting from Blue Granite – especially, given
3 the horror stories I've been getting from neighbors
4 and folks here tonight. That's something that we –
5 you know, I think it's going to put in line with
6 what you've heard echoed elsewhere, in terms of
7 real estate and what it's going to do to this town
8 if this increase comes through. It's going to
9 continue.

10 You know, I hear over and over again the
11 attitude that I've seen, frankly, from the inside,
12 from utilities, again in my professional
13 experience – which I prefer not to get into too
14 much detail on. But the attitude that I see over
15 and over again, endemic in utilities, is, "Well, we
16 can always just soak the ratepayers."

17 When you have a government-sponsored monopoly
18 like a utility is, it is such a delicate position.
19 It's not something where you have free-market
20 competition and we can't simply go, "Well, you
21 know, I'm going to go with somebody that's going to
22 provide me better service and/or better price."
23 And they need to be held accountable for their
24 pollution, for their malfeasance, for all the other
25 things that have been detailed here tonight, you

1 know, or you're going to see young families, like
2 mine who moved here, moved to South Carolina for a
3 better opportunity, a place where we can more
4 easily afford to live – if we're going to be making
5 those choices long-term of where we want to be, if
6 this continues, it's certainly not going to be in
7 any area that they service. Thank you.

8 [Applause]

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Mr. May.

10 Any questions from the parties?

11 [No response]

12 Commissioners?

13 [No response]

14 Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

15 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

16 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Melinda Weeks, Rosemary Spell,
17 and Timothy Hartley.

18 [Witness affirmed]

19 THEREUPON came,

20 **M E L I N D A W E E K S ,**

21 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

22 **WITNESS:** Melinda Weeks.

23 I've lived in Irmo for about 25 years, I've
24 been in my house, raised my two children, and went
25 through a divorce. I live on my own, a dental

1 hygienist. There's lots of people that come in our
2 dental practice and if we tried to raise fees on
3 our fillings or crowns like they're raising their
4 fees on our sewage, that we have to have – there's
5 no choice, no option – how would y'all – I don't
6 think you would buy the crown or the filling. I
7 don't think you'd get your teeth cleaned.

8 My point is, you know, I have – I'm doing
9 about four things right now. My kids have moved
10 out; I live in my home by myself. I need a
11 roommate. I'm an adult, 50 years old with a good
12 income. It's ridiculous that they can charge what
13 they can charge and we don't options. We don't
14 have a choice. We just got to pay it, because
15 they'll cut your sewer off. It costs more to flush
16 your toilet than to get clean drinking water.

17 [Applause]

18 That is ridiculous. You know, when I first
19 had my house, I think our sewer was about \$30-some
20 a month, back in 1994. I remember going up to \$40-
21 something, \$50-something, to \$60-something. And
22 now they're wanting to, you know, what, 40 percent
23 increase? Who gets that kind of increase? I can't
24 go to my boss and ask for that.

25 Where does the money come from? How do we pay

1 it? I'm working four jobs right now. I get up
2 early in the morning, 4:30 in the morning, to go
3 sit at someone's house, because they're a nurse and
4 they have to be at the hospital at 7 o'clock, until
5 their ex-husband can come pick up their kids for
6 school. When they pick their kid up for school,
7 then I get to go to work, and I work till 5 or 6
8 o'clock. My job is Monday through Thursday at my
9 dental office. I work Fridays also, at a
10 periodontist's office, to get extra money. That's
11 not my regular job. I already work four 10-hour
12 days, Monday through Thursday. I'm trying to sell
13 Scentsy now, trying to make extra money. Anybody
14 want any? But, I mean, it's ridiculous. Why
15 should – I mean, it is ridiculous. And I would
16 hope that y'all would not approve this. It is
17 obscene. Obscene.

18 [Applause]

19 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Weeks. Hang
20 on, let me see if there are any questions.

21 Any questions?

22 [No response]

23 Thank you.

24 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

25 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Rosemary Spell, Timothy Hartley,

1 Olivia Felder. Rosemary Spell, Timothy Hartley,
2 and Olivia Felder.

3 [Witness affirmed]

4 THEREUPON came,

5 R O S E M A R Y S P E L L ,
6 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

7 WITNESS: My name is Rosemary Spell.

8 I've lived in Raintree Acres since 1974, so I
9 have seen mine increase considerably. Now what
10 they're trying to offer now is just ridiculous.
11 I'm a single mother with a special-needs child.
12 I'm not there during the day. He goes to Babcock
13 Center. I leave there, go to Chapin, take care of
14 my elderly parents. So the only time I'm home is
15 in the afternoon.

16 In Raintree Acres, when I first moved out
17 there, we had – our fire hydrants worked. Now none
18 of the fire hydrants work. They're painted black
19 and silver. We had a house burn down about six
20 years ago because there was no water there.

21 Just last summer, they came in, they tore up
22 my front yard all the way down the side and up the
23 back, and I was there, at 70 years old, having to
24 go out there and work in there, and try to get it
25 looking right, after I asked the guys that was

standing there to please correct it. "Oh, yes, ma'am, we'll do it." Soon as I went to go check on my parents, I come back; they're gone.

So, I mean, and now they want to increase it again? I mean, I'm at the point where I'm about ready to move. I have land up in Chapin with my parents. I have a septic tank and I have a well. So, I mean, you know, the only reason I'm staying here is because I love Irmo. But at this rate, I'm about ready to move.

And please, you know, just take in consideration us elderly people that are on fixed incomes. Thank you.

[Applause]

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, ma'am.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER ERVIN: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Commissioner Ervin.

EXAMINATION

BY COMMISSIONER ERVIN:

Q Ms. Spell, this is the second fire-hydrant case we've heard about tonight. Could you tell us, again, what the street address is where the hydrants are?

A Well, I live in Raintree Acres on Beechwood Lane. There's a fire hydrant on the corner of my – of

1 Beechwood Road. If you go up to the top of the hill,
2 I'm not sure what the name of that street is, but
3 there's another hydrant right there. There's two of
4 them up there that are both – they can just go through
5 the whole neighborhood. Every one of them is not
6 working.

7 **Q** Would you be willing to talk with a company
8 representative about it, before you leave, so they can
9 get better directions and so forth?

10 **A** I'd be more than glad to.

11 **COMMISSIONER ERVIN:** If you would, just get up
12 with them before you leave. Thank you.

13 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.

14 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

15 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Timothy Hartley, Olivia Felder,
16 and Arthur McClain. Timothy Hartley, Olivia
17 Felder, and Arthur McClain.

18 [Witness affirmed]

19 THEREUPON came,

20 **T I M O T H Y H A R T L E Y ,**

21 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

22 **WITNESS:** Timothy Hartley. Good evening.

23 I'm the HOA president for The Village at Lake
24 Murray. I'm representing 84 units in that unit –
25 in that community.

1 We – in our community, we have 84 units, and
2 we have a pump station. We pay \$65.08 for each
3 unit to Blue Granite. But what we do, all our
4 sewage goes to our pump station, and our pump
5 station pumps it up to the main road. We could
6 take care of all our drainage and everything. We
7 could take care of that all ourselves.

8 Our community is trying to understand, why are
9 we paying this rate to Blue Granite for everything
10 that – for the rates? Because anytime there's a
11 sewer problem in there, we have to take care of it
12 ourselves. Because everything we do – we just put
13 \$30,000 in pumps into a lift station. Blue Granite
14 didn't do that. We did. The HOA had to pay
15 \$30,000 for two brand-new pumps in our lift
16 station. But we still pay them \$65.08 every month.
17 And then they want to increase our rates to \$100?
18 Which is going to mean, for 84 units, a yearly – a
19 yearly cost for those 84 units is over \$100,000.
20 And we live right next-door to the treatment plant,
21 which is 500 yards from us. Which don't make no
22 sense to us. We have to control – we control our
23 own sewer pipes and everything in our community.
24 So we're just trying to understand, why the rate
25 increase is coming to us in this way. That's all

1 we have.

2 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Mr. Hartley.

3 WITNESS: Yes, sir.

4 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Any questions?

5 Commissioner Belser.

6 WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

7 EXAMINATION

8 BY COMMISSIONER BELSER:

9 Q Thank you for being here.

10 A Thank you.

11 Q This pump station, y'all own?

12 A Yes.

13 Q The HOA?

14 A Yes, ma'am.

15 Q The property owners?

16 A Yes, ma'am.

17 Q And when – y'all have to repair it, and you're
18 responsible for getting the sewer through that pump
19 station, up to –

20 A To the road, to the main road, yes, ma'am.

21 Q And whose line is that?

22 A That's – everything up to the main road is ours. We
23 take care of all that, all the repairs and everything,
24 all the sewer pipes, it all belongs to the HOA, to the
25 community.

1 Q And then when it gets up to the road, it becomes –

2 A It becomes Blue Granite.

3 Q – a Blue Granite line?

4 A And it's 500 yards to the service plant.

5 Q And they're treating it as not a pass-through that's
6 going to Columbia or somewhere else?

7 A No.

8 Q I'm not sure where this is located.

9 A It's right next – we're right next to the treatment
10 plant.

11 Q No, but I mean I'm not sure where Village of Lake Murray
12 is.

13 A We're right by Highway 6.

14 Q All right. Thank you, very much. Appreciate you being
15 here.

16 A Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you.

18 Any other questions for Mr. Hartley?

19 [No response]

20 Thank you, sir.

21 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

22 MR. BOCKMAN: Olivia Felder and Arthur
23 McClain.

24 [Witness affirmed]

25 <

1 THEREUPON came,

2 O L I V I A F E L D E R ,

3 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

4 WITNESS: Good evening. I am Olivia Felder,
5 and I'm representing my neighborhood, with special
6 emphasis on my home located at 543 North Royal
7 Tower Drive.

8 Since 2002, we have addressed issues of Lost
9 Creek and two manholes in my yard. I have
10 communicated with the Corps of Engineers, Richland
11 County, Lexington County, and the Ombudsman's
12 Office, to no avail. I've contacted Carolina
13 Waters, I contacted Blue Granite. Nothing.

14 Several weeks ago at a Council meeting, I was
15 present and heard Attorney Moore address the issue
16 of the same identical thing that I have tried to
17 reach out to get help, the sewer overflow into Lost
18 Creek.

19 Why did it have to take that long? Why did we
20 have to come before you, our Commission? If they
21 can generate bills, they can maintain their
22 equipment and the proper – and carry out the proper
23 protocols, and making sure that sewer did not flow,
24 that I did not have the stench of the raw sewer
25 from the creek and the manholes coming into my

1 house, backing up my lines.

2 I was sitting here at Council meeting, and
3 when I went home, I had my yard striped. So I
4 contacted the Mayor and I says, "Is it necessary
5 that companies have right-of-ways and easements to
6 come onto your property and to do whatever they
7 want?" "Who are they?" "I don't know. I'm just
8 representing Blue Granite as what we were told."

9 Six o'clock in the morning, right after
10 Attorney Moore addressed the issue of the raw
11 sewer, I hear all of these trucks in front of my
12 house, catching the sewer. But I didn't have it
13 because Mr. Denton, the President, was here, and he
14 claimed he had no knowledge of it. Well, since I
15 have to pay them, I think it's time for them to pay
16 me for the untruths that they have told and the
17 dilapidated infrastructure –

18 [3-minute signal]

19 And I'm sorry. And I have photos. Since they
20 didn't know, not only are the trucks, every time it
21 rains, in the manholes pumping it out all day long,
22 going up and down the road. I got home, my yard is
23 dug up [indicating], two weeks ago. Where is
24 respect? Where is the respect? You want your
25 money, you want to plug up the holes. I had a hole

1 in my front yard. I don't – I'm not the location
2 for your company. I'm not going to do it. So now
3 I have two stoppers. They dug my yard up
4 [indicating] and the president denied knowing that
5 any work was being done in that subdivision.

6 Sewer overflowing out of the manholes. Why
7 are you plugging something up? Let's get it right.

8 Now, there are many grants for the
9 infrastructure of your equipment. I am a grants
10 writer. And if I need to come and help you,
11 instead of putting the burden on our residents and
12 on me for what you are doing and trying to get a
13 raise, it's time for you to get it right. We don't
14 need to have the Commission to have to sit here and
15 babysit what your due diligent duties are to the
16 citizens and maintaining your equipment. I don't
17 need sewer running, I don't need to have my water
18 cut off because of the mixture of the sewer. The
19 Commissioners can't resolve that.

20 I'd rather do like if I was on a farm. We had
21 septic tanks, and I paid to have my tank pumped
22 out. You can get all of your equipment out of my
23 yard, but I will not – I will not – be subjected to
24 paying you, you coming in without right-of-ways or
25 easements, and just taking over the community.

1 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Ms. Felder.

2 WITNESS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Appreciate your testimony.

4 Anybody have questions of Ms. Felder?

5 MR. MOORE: Just quickly.

6 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Mr. Moore.

7 CROSS EXAMINATION

8 BY MR. MOORE:

9 Q Ms. Felder, what's your address?

10 A 543 North Royal Tower Drive.

11 Q Are the manholes in the backyard or the front yard?

12 A It's one in the front and one in the back.

13 Q All right. You know Mr. Witt Klein, here, right?

14 Public Works, Town of Irmo?

15 A No, I don't.

16 Q Well, this is Mr. Klein [indicating]. Anytime you got a
17 problem that you can't get Blue Granite to respond to,
18 you call the Town of Irmo: 781-7050. You talk to Mr.
19 Witt Klein and he'll help you. Okay?

20 A All right. Thank you, very much.

21 MR. MOORE: Thank you.

22 WITNESS: And thank you.

23 [Applause]

24 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you.

25 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

1 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Arthur McClain?

2 [Witness affirmed]

3 THEREUPON came,

4 **A R T H U R M c C L A I N ,**

5 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

6 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Mr. McClain, did you speak
7 Monday night?

8 **WITNESS:** I did.

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Okay. You can only speak
10 at one night hearing. You can't speak again
11 tonight, so – we appreciate you being here.

12 **WITNESS:** I just had one –

13 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** I'm sorry. That's the rules.

14 **WITNESS:** Certainly. All right. Thank you,
15 very much, then.

16 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

17 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

18 **MR. BOCKMAN:** Mr. Chair, that concludes this
19 evening's roster.

20 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** We want to thank everybody
21 for being here tonight. Thank you for telling us
22 your thoughts, and we appreciate it. And we are
23 adjourned.

24 [WHEREUPON, at 8:37 p.m., the hearing in
25 the above-entitled matter was adjourned,

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to reconvene at 6:00 p.m. on February 3,
2020, in Union, South Carolina.]

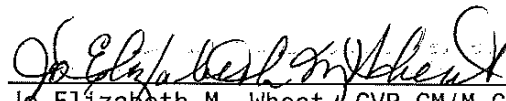
[WHEREUPON, Hearing Exhibit No. 6 was
marked and received in evidence.]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM-GNSC, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that the foregoing is, to the best of my skill and ability, a true and correct transcript of all the proceedings had and testimony adduced in a public night hearing held in the above-captioned matter before the PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA;

That the witnesses appearing during said hearing were sworn or affirmed to state the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, on this the 4th day of March, 2020.


 Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC
 Hearings Reporter, PSC/SC